UnitingCare Australia

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Social Policy Research Centre

Because Children and Families Matter
Delivering on the National Reform Agenda

▶BECAUSE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES MATTER

DELIVERING ON THE NATIONAL REFORM AGENDA

A comparative analysis of the national reform agendas related to children, young people and families using stories from the lives of children, young people and families, advice from UnitingCare service providers and analysis from UnitingCare Australia and the Social Policy Research Centre.

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BECAUSE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES MATTER

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Abbreviations

EYLF	*Belonging, Being and Becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia*
Investing in the Early Years	*Investing in the Early Years-A National Early Childhood Development Strategy*
Protecting Children	*Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020*
Reducing Violence	*The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women: Immediate Government Actions*
SPRC	Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales
The Road Home	*The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness*
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
Youth Attainment	Australian Government Compact with Young Australians: National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions

Executive Summary

UnitingCare Australia is committed to a fair and just society and to the principles and benefits of social inclusion. Social inclusion is partly about enabling participation in the economic, political and social life of Australia, which can only be achieved if we reduce poverty, stigma and discrimination. Achieving better inclusion outcomes is also about actively naming and dismantling excluding practices, structures and attitudes.

In our work in every state and territory, in metropolitan, rural and remote communities across Australia, UnitingCare sees both the multi-dimensional causes and intersecting impacts of social exclusion on children, young people and families. We also see the possibilities and transformation enabled by timely, relevant and integrated services that build on individual and community strengths.

We are confident that a greater focus on children and young people will provide opportunities for concrete and measurable improvements in the lives of this and future generations and to better achieve the Australian Government's ambitious reform agenda.
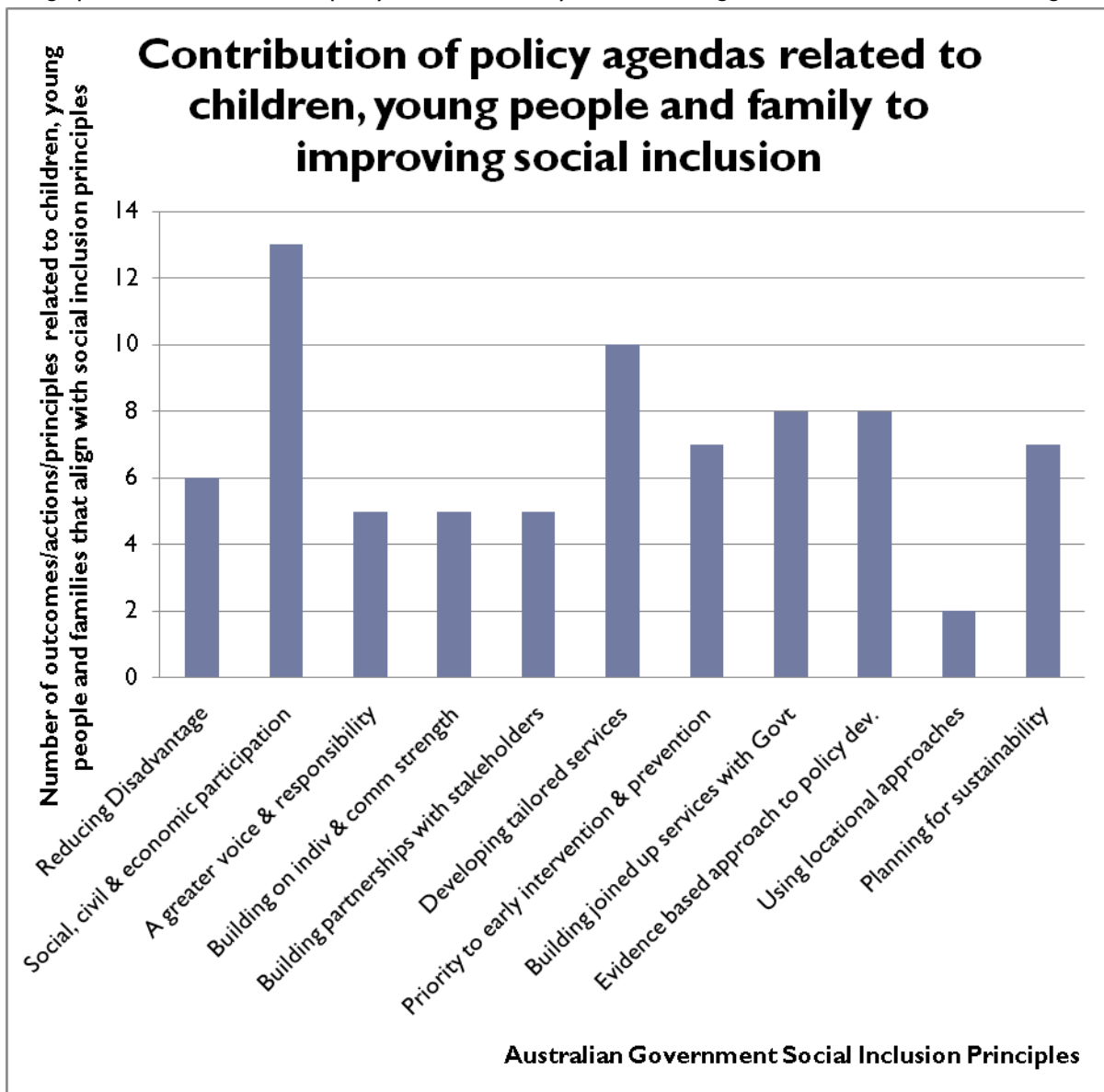
With the development of the Australia's first National Framework for Protection of Australia's Children, the opportunity to review policy through the lens of the needs of children, young people and families, particularly those who are most vulnerable, is timely.

The release of Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020 was a catalyst for UnitingCare agencies across Australia to invest in this project to identify how social policy reforms can be best aligned to support children, young people and families.

UnitingCare Australia and the Social Policy Research Centre have partnered to produce a paper that maps the core components and strengths of the key reform agendas announced in 2009 that are relevant to children, young people and families:

▶ Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020

▶ Investing in the Early Years-A National Early Childhood Development Strategy

▶ Belonging, Being and Becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia

▶ Australian Government Compact with Young Australians: National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions

▶ The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women: Immediate Government Actions

▶ The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness

The graph below shows that the policy frameworks analysed here do align well with the social inclusion agenda.

Contribution of policy agendas related to children, young people and family to improving social inclusion

Number of outcomes/actions/principles related to children, young people and families that align with social inclusion principles

Australian Government Social Inclusion Principles	Value
Reducing Disadvantage	6
Social, civil & economic participation	13
A greater voice & responsibility	5
Building on indiv & comm strength	5
Building partnerships with stakeholders	5
Developing tailored services	10
Priority to early intervention & prevention	7
Building joined up services with Govt	8
Evidence based approach to policy dev.	8
Using locational approaches	2
Planning for sustainability	7

Australian Government Social Inclusion Principles

These policies represent a visionary reform agenda across the lives of Australians. They clearly articulate the responsibilities of individuals, communities, services and governments. We welcome the recognition of the need to prevent and respond to identified problems as well as build healthy, nurturing environments for all. We also welcome the recognition of the importance of stable, appropriate and affordable housing with good access to public and community infrastructure and services and that housing provides an essential foundation for a decent life for children, young people and families.

Our analysis is a first step in thinking through the challenges and opportunities in implementation of this reform agenda. Creating the space for further analysis and an on-going dialogue will extend

implementation of these reform agendas. For example, we recognise that the needs and aspirations of children and young people with disabilities, and their families, are not visible or adequately attended to in many of the policy frameworks, nor in this analysis. Attending to this gap is a key priority of the UnitingCare network.

Greater integration of the objectives and desired outcomes of this reform agenda across government portfolios, levels of government and local communities will value-add to the Government's policy objectives and result in more inclusive and cohesive communities in which all children, young people and families can flourish, grow and contribute. Greater integration will be supported by both enabling innovation and delivering administrative reform.

With a foundational commitment to building an inclusive community for all this paper looks at whether there is practical alignment of aims and activities across these reform agendas. The analysis is based on a common set of questions that allow us to test whether all parties are able to deliver on the promise of the national reform agenda:

1. Does the policy incorporate a rights-based approach, and facilitate agency of children/young people/families?

2. What focus is there on primary, secondary and tertiary approaches?

3. Has the agenda identified the relevant risk factors for poor outcomes and prioritised at-risk groups?

4. How does the agenda address investment in improving the system capacity and system integration?

This paper also includes a review of the evidence base that calls for a paradigm shift in the wider system that will enable a genuine focus on early intervention in the life of children and in the life of problems.

The analysis in this paper reflects the expertise and strengths of three key stakeholders. Stories from the lives of children, young people and families are shared via case studies, on-the-ground implementation advice is provided by UnitingCare service providers, and strategic analysis is provided from the advocacy team at UnitingCare Australia and the Social Policy Research Centre research team.

We acknowledge the significant work already being led by the Australian Government and others. However the analysis outlined in this paper shows that greater social inclusion outcomes and practical integration of reform agendas could be achieved by:

▸ Looking at the policy reforms through the lens of the rights and experiences of children and young people and families, and at intended and unintended impacts.

▸ Improved cross-jurisdictional alignment of priorities, actions and mechanisms to implement the reform agenda. This needs to be underpinned by national leadership and reporting, for example through COAG, and should include using locational approaches, enabling a greater voice and responsibility for

people who experience exclusion, building on individual and community strengths and respectful partnerships with stakeholders.

▸ Locally relevant planning, funding and service delivery across local, state/territory and Australian Governments and in partnership with non-government service providers.

▸ Leading a paradigm shift in child protection away from an adversarial legal system and forensic approach to an inquisitorial and more holistic approach to preventing and responding to abuse and neglect.

▸ Strengthening each element of the service system, from universal to intensive, and embedding early intervention into all areas of policy development and service delivery.

▸ Focusing policy attention in family law to make sure children are better protected.

▸ Addressing issues of unmet need particularly in terms of providing accessible services for the duration and intensity required to deliver agreed outcomes.

▸ Further reducing disadvantage through other areas of government responsibility including ensuring adequate incomes for a decent life and financial stability through key life transitions.

▸ Improved service integration, cultural change (e.g., shifting away from the current risk-management, forensically-driven, managerial approach), and other organisational/structural changes in Child Protection systems, in addition to a significant injection of resources into services for children and families at all levels of need.

There are also a number of specific actions that could be taken to enhance the efforts of people and organisations involved in operationalising these policy reforms and ensuring they have the greatest chance of success:

Service development

▸ Sharing information about and providing funding for wider adoption of previously successful integrated approaches - for example, the Hume-Moreland Integrated Family Services Catchment Operating Model (known as HMIFS) in Victoria.

- Utilising the approach developed in the Communities for Children and Communities for Children Plus programs, to design and deliver locally responsive services.

- Improving data collection and dissemination

Young people

- Addressing the misalignment of the youth transition work with many of the supportive and preventive messages in other policy frameworks.

- Maintaining a focus on enabling and supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable young people to get the right support, early in their adolescence and for long enough, to enable them to reach their potential to contribute to the future of Australia.

- Continuing a rights-based approach to service delivery that ensures disadvantaged and vulnerable young people continue to get their needs met, and governments do not impose mutual obligations that can't be fulfilled.

- More specific reference to vulnerabilities and indicators of risk, for children and young people aged 8-14 years old and how best to recognise and respond to them.

- Prioritising actions that address the needs of children aged 8 -14 years by providing services and support through natural points of contact (for example, sport clubs, recreation programs, local libraries).

- Extending programs like *Reconnect* to enable access for children and young people in the late primary school years to assist with successful transitions to high school and with family relationships during the transition to adolescence.

Workforce development

- Better supporting the workforce, funding bodies and program administrators involved in implementing these policy reforms including building their knowledge and skills in implementing, monitoring and evaluating a public health approach to service development and delivery.

- Addressing skills gaps and shortages in the services that work with children, young people and families.

- Initiatives that create and maintain stable employment opportunities for women with the interest and skills to work in social services could deliver improved social inclusion outcomes as well as address the significant skills shortages and gaps in the social services sector.

Funding and administrative changes

- Addressing barriers to sustaining good programs, including getting rid of short-term funding, addressing workforce shortages and gaps and strengthening and sustaining cross-portfolio partnerships within government.

- Prioritising allocation of resources to and developing infrastructure that supports collaboration, incorporates the costs of building and maintaining partnerships into funding agreements and assists organisations to manage multiple accountabilities.

- Administrative reform that will reduce the cost of accessing funding, better aligns and simplifies reporting on funding and reduces the burden of other compliance requirements across different government funding sources.

1. Introduction: Social Inclusion and Australia's social policy reform agenda

UnitingCare Australia believes that as one of the wealthiest countries we should be able to provide all children, young people and families with access to a decent life. This includes:

▶ Freedom from poverty
▶ Appropriate food, clothing, housing and health care
▶ Access to necessary supports and services
▶ Freedom from pain and ill health
▶ A good start in life
▶ Meaningful work, education, rest and recreation
▶ The opportunity to participate in and contribute to communities.

Where families and communities live with hardship and disadvantage it is difficult for individual members to flourish. Working in partnership with the community, government assistance should be carefully targeted at providing ongoing and genuine support for those who experience hardship and disadvantage.

Our commitment to seeing these principles and values enacted in policy motivated the UnitingCare network to partner with the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of New South Wales to produce a paper that captures the core components and strengths of the key reform agendas announced in 2009 that are relevant to children, young people and families.

The documents reviewed are:

▶ Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020 (*Protecting Children*)

▶ Investing in the Early Years-A National Early Childhood Development Strategy (*Investing in the Early Years*)

▶ Belonging, Being and Becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia (*EYLF*)

▶ Australian Government Compact with Young Australians: National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions (*Youth Attainment*)

▶ The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women: Immediate Government Actions (*Reducing Violence*)

▶ The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness (*The Road Home*).

The policy reforms reviewed here were developed in the context of broader debates about social inclusion, and policy reforms to increase social inclusion. Although not without its critics, social inclusion is increasingly important as a framework for understanding the benefits and characteristics of *participation* as a social citizen; as well as the causes and dynamics of *disadvantage* and exclusion from the benefits of Australian society. The Australian Government's Social Inclusion Agenda contains an overarching 'vision' of a socially inclusive society 'in which all Australians feel valued and have the opportunity to participate fully in the life of our society'.

The Australian Government's current social inclusion priorities are:

▶ addressing the incidence and needs of jobless families with children

▶ delivering effective support to children at greatest risk of long term disadvantage

▶ focusing on particular locations, neighbourhoods and communities to ensure programs and services are getting to the right places

▶ addressing the incidence of homelessness

▶ employment for people living with a disability or mental illness

▶ closing the gap for Indigenous Australians (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009).

As these priorities indicate, social inclusion draws attention to the multi-dimensional and intersecting causes of social exclusion.

Social inclusion and social exclusion are increasingly important concepts for policy and research. Australia is one of several countries that have a social inclusion policy agenda, and Australian scholars have taken up social exclusion as a more effective approach to the analysis of deprivation than previous approaches, which have focused on income poverty (Saunders et al., 2007; Saunders and Wong, 2009). Researchers

from the United Kingdom distinguish between 'wide' and 'deep' forms of exclusion (Finn, 2008). Relatively large populations experience wide forms of exclusion, which are addressed by policies that strengthen both universal and targeted services (or, in public health terms, primary and secondary prevention systems). Universal services include education, housing and employment services. Targeted services, or secondary interventions, are designed to address problems before they become severe, and include early intervention and prevention services. Relatively few people experience deep forms of exclusion, and these populations are also described as experiencing 'multiple and complex problems' or 'deep and persistent' exclusion (Thomas and Buckmaster, 2009). However, while numerically few, the deeply excluded are disproportionately represented in child protection, family services, mental health, substance abuse, and family violence services, and in juvenile and criminal justice systems (Mitchell, 2008). Statutory systems of care and intensive, long-term, expensive services (or, in public health terms, tertiary systems) are necessary to assist these individuals and families.

Policy commitments to social inclusion therefore necessarily incorporate commitments to strengthening each element of the service system—from universal to intensive—in order to better meet the diverse needs of Australian families. *Protecting Children* is the only

document under review here that explicitly adopts the public health model, but each of the documents is illuminated by analysis that frames them in terms of public health and social inclusion approaches. *Protecting Children* states that the child protection system should consist of more than a statutory system, and rather should include universal and secondary levels of service delivery, similar to health and education (p8). The four levels of service delivery are outlined from least to most intense:

▸ Universal preventative initiatives to support all families and children

▸ Early intervention services targeted to vulnerable families and children

▸ Targeted services and programs for 'at-risk' families and children

▸ Statutory system.

A pyramid structure of service delivery illustrates how this approach enables more timely detection of issues at the universal service level, which in turn enables families and services to address problems earlier. This then leads to children and families getting necessary support and access to programs that can strengthen families and prevent involvement in the statutory system.
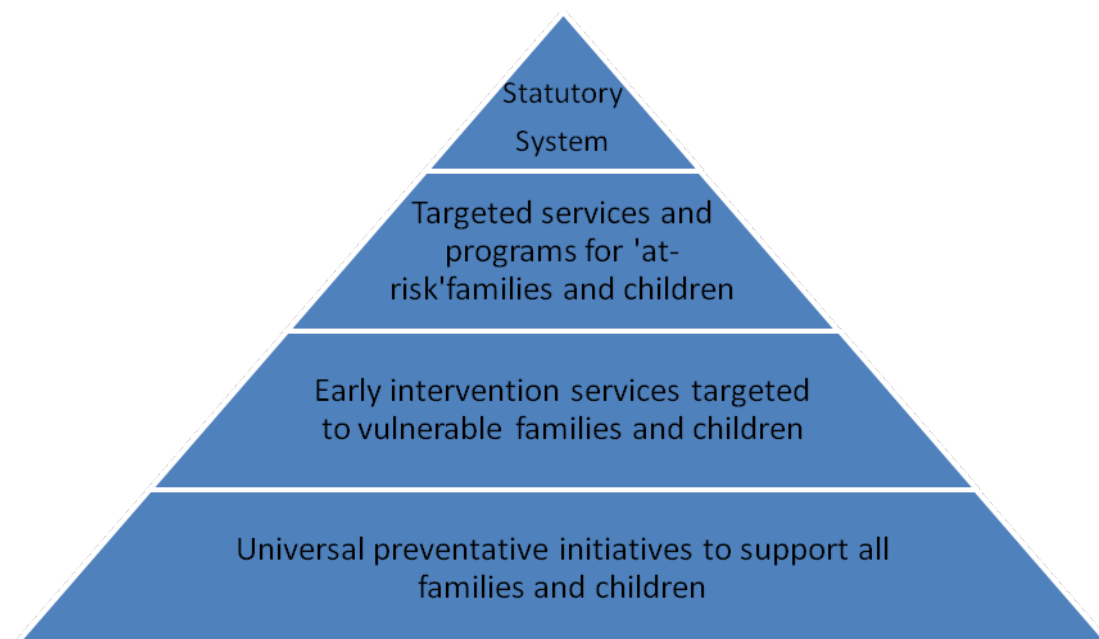
The following section of this report presents a brief overview of lessons from international research and policy reform on the importance not only of systems change, but cultural change, in improving policies to protect children and families.

Section 3 describes each of the documents that make up the policy framework under review, and presents a comparative analysis of the policy reform agenda, using four test questions:

1. Does the policy incorporate a rights-based approach, and facilitate agency of children/young people/families?

2. What focus is there on primary, secondary and tertiary approaches?

3. Has the agenda identified the relevant risk factors for poor outcomes and prioritised at-risk groups?

4. How does the agenda address investment in improving the system capacity and system integration?

Section 4 provides an overview of each of the key documents, and a brief analysis in relation to the test questions.

Analyses are illustrated with case studies provided by UnitingCare services across Australia, which illuminate the challenges and possibilities of delivering effective services, and of making changes to service delivery in line with the policy reform agenda. Aliases are ascribed to individuals, and in some cases to organisations, to protect confidentiality.

Brief concluding remarks are provided at Section 5.

2. Lessons from research

In the past decade, there has been a shift, internationally, in child protection policy and practice towards greater recognition of the importance of preventive, family-focused support, increase in preventive services, improvements in knowledge about better 'filtering' of cases into the child protection system and improvements in our understanding of which interventions are effective. Despite this, there has been growing recognition that the current approach to statutory child protection services in Australia is itself flawed. Examples of some of the challenges include: increasing notifications, but slower increase in substantiations (meaning large numbers of families being unnecessarily drawn into the child protection system); and a forensically-focused investigative approach, without sufficient resources for prevention and treatment (which creates a risk-averse culture that further undermines the ability to develop trust and engage in positive work with families). There is increasing evidence that involvement in the statutory system can have significant adverse effects on children and families.

Protecting children is more than ensuring statutory child protection departments do a better job of detecting and responding to concerns about children's safety. Family support, and whole-of-community 'public health' approaches to child wellbeing have been shown to reduce the problem of child maltreatment by providing universal prevention and targeted secondary service systems to support all families (particularly those with high needs), thus reduce the demand on tertiary systems. These preventive and supportive processes have to be developed to effectively work alongside statutory child protection interventions, which will continue to play a part in any reformed system. However, responses also need to be based on community-identified needs, using community engagement models to ensure cultural appropriateness and engagement as well. Despite the recognition that current systems need a radical overhaul, it has proved extremely difficult for governments around the world to radically change the focus of child protection systems.

The tendency has been to 'bolt on' preventive programs to the current child protection processes, but this approach is unlikely to achieve the objective of reducing child maltreatment. Instead of this approach it is necessary to completely rethink the role and function of the child protection system within the wider range of policies and programs aimed at promoting the wellbeing of children. Furthermore, it is not enough to move from one structure to an alternative structure. The real issues are not structural but relate to the underlying functions and the culture of the child protection system. This is evidenced by the fact that all the states in Australia, as well as the USA, Canada, the UK, Ireland and New Zealand all confront very similar issues with their child protection systems, despite vastly different organisational structures and legislative underpinning.

What is similar across child protection systems in the English-speaking countries is an adversarial legal system and a forensic approach to child protection which is governed by notions of risk and safety to the detriment of need and support.

Child protection cannot be seen as the responsibility of only one agency. It must rely on the wider range of services and supports that can be drawn into a holistic approach to the prevention of child abuse and neglect. This support network should integrate community wide responses with targeted interventions for those families most in need. This is of particular importance in Indigenous communities, not only because of the over-representation of Indigenous children in statutory child protection activity, but because of the potential for community-owned and community-led initiatives to support the health, wellbeing and safety of Indigenous children in culturally safe ways. Some of the broader social policy contexts around childhood include:

▸ public health (including mental health, disability, maternal and child health services, etc.)

▸ housing and homelessness (including refugee resettlement services)

▸ education

▸ domestic violence, juvenile sex offenders, crime prevention and justice system responses

▸ drug and alcohol and other adult-focused services

▸ Indigenous health and social services

▸ child care and early childhood services

▸ employment and income security

▸ family law and family relationships services.

Protecting Children could provide the opportunity for Australia to become the pioneer for new ways of ensuring the protection and wellbeing of children, by bringing together the necessary funding, cooperation and agreement across the levels of government, as well as with local communities and service delivery organisations. However to do that it is necessary to go far beyond the recommendations of the current Framework in order to develop a new way of thinking about children and families.

In addition to improved service integration, cultural change (e.g., shifting away from the current risk-management, forensically-driven, managerial approach), and other organisational/structural changes, there needs to be a significant injection of resources into services for children and families at all levels of need. The process of change needs to be incremental rather than revolutionary, and it should involve consultation and deliberation along the way, but should not lose focus from the ultimate goal of better engagement between front line caseworkers and the children and families who come into contact with the child protection/child welfare systems – in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children.

3. Comparative analysis of key documents

This section provides a comparative analysis of:

▶ Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020

▶ Investing in the Early Years-A National Early Childhood Development Strategy

▶ Belonging, Being and Becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia

▶ Australian Government Compact with Young Australians

▶ The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women: Immediate Government Actions

▶ The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness.

Full analysis of each of these policies is provided in Section 4.

3.1 Context of documents

The documents discussed in this paper differ with respect to their intended purpose and scope. As a result the emphasis on measurable outcomes and indicators varies. Two of the documents, *Protecting Children* and the *EYLF* outline a set of principles, aspirations and guidelines to achieve the intended purpose of each document. A large part of *Protecting Children* is dedicated to discussing specific strategies and actions to achieve the framework's outcomes, including around 30 indicators that will be used to measure and monitor change. In contrast, the *EYLF* focuses on less measurable outcomes of practice, placing more of an emphasis on guiding practitioners, parents and the community.

Similar to *Protecting Children*, two other documents, *Investing in the Early Years* and *Reducing Violence* focus on outcomes and actions to achieve the desired goal.

The final two documents analysed, *The Road Home* and the *National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions* (*Youth Attainment*) differ from each other, and also from the other four documents. *The Road Home* includes specific measurable targets and indicators that align with its vision and two main goals. Finally, *Youth Attainment* is a partnership agreement, and the shortest of the documents, which primarily outlines COAG's commitment to youth education, training and employment and discusses the roles and responsibilities of the parties involved. To some extent, these responsibilities are accompanied by specific targets and actions.

Another point of comparison is the jurisdictional platform of the documents. Of the six key reform agendas included in this paper, four are Council of Australian Government (COAG) initiatives, and

include a commitment from Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments. *Protecting Children* was developed through research, discussion papers and consultation and Commonwealth responsibility is held by the Department for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). *Youth Attainment* is a COAG document which sets out the Government's commitment and plan to deliver their Compact with Young Australians to support young people's (between the age of 15 and 24) education and skills attainment and transitions to employment. *Youth Attainment* was endorsed by COAG under its priority 'Improving Productivity – Better skilling and job capability now and in the future'. Similarly, *Investing in the Early Years* also falls under COAG's Improving Productivity agenda. However the scope of the two documents differ, where Youth Attainment is an agreement between the Commonwealth and the States/Territories which focuses on the distribution of responsibilities between the different levels of Government and other stakeholders, including organisations and the private sector. In contrast, *Investing in the Early Years* outlines a strategy, including outcomes and actions based on evidence, background discussion papers and public consultation to achieve the government's commitment and the strategy's vision.

At the Commonwealth level, both documents are primarily the responsibility of the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). *Investing in the Early Years* is a component of the Office of Early Childhood Education and Child Care's (OECECC) Early Childhood National Policy Agenda. Similar to *Investing in the Early Years*, the *EYLF* is also included in the OECECC Policy Agenda (a

component of the Quality Agenda) and was endorsed by COAG as a national and state/territory partnership framework.

In contrast to these four documents, *The Road Home* and *Reducing Violence* are Commonwealth Government initiatives, with different scope and purposes. *The Road Home* is a White Paper and as such an authoritative report generated within Government and intended to guide decision makers in addressing problems.

Reducing Violence is the Government's response to *Time for Action: The National Council's Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, 2009-2021*, which was produced by the National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children after an extensive consultation process. These two documents are not based on a partnership agreement and, as a result, there is less cohesion between jurisdictions. The policy agenda reflected in both documents is the responsibility of FaHCSIA.
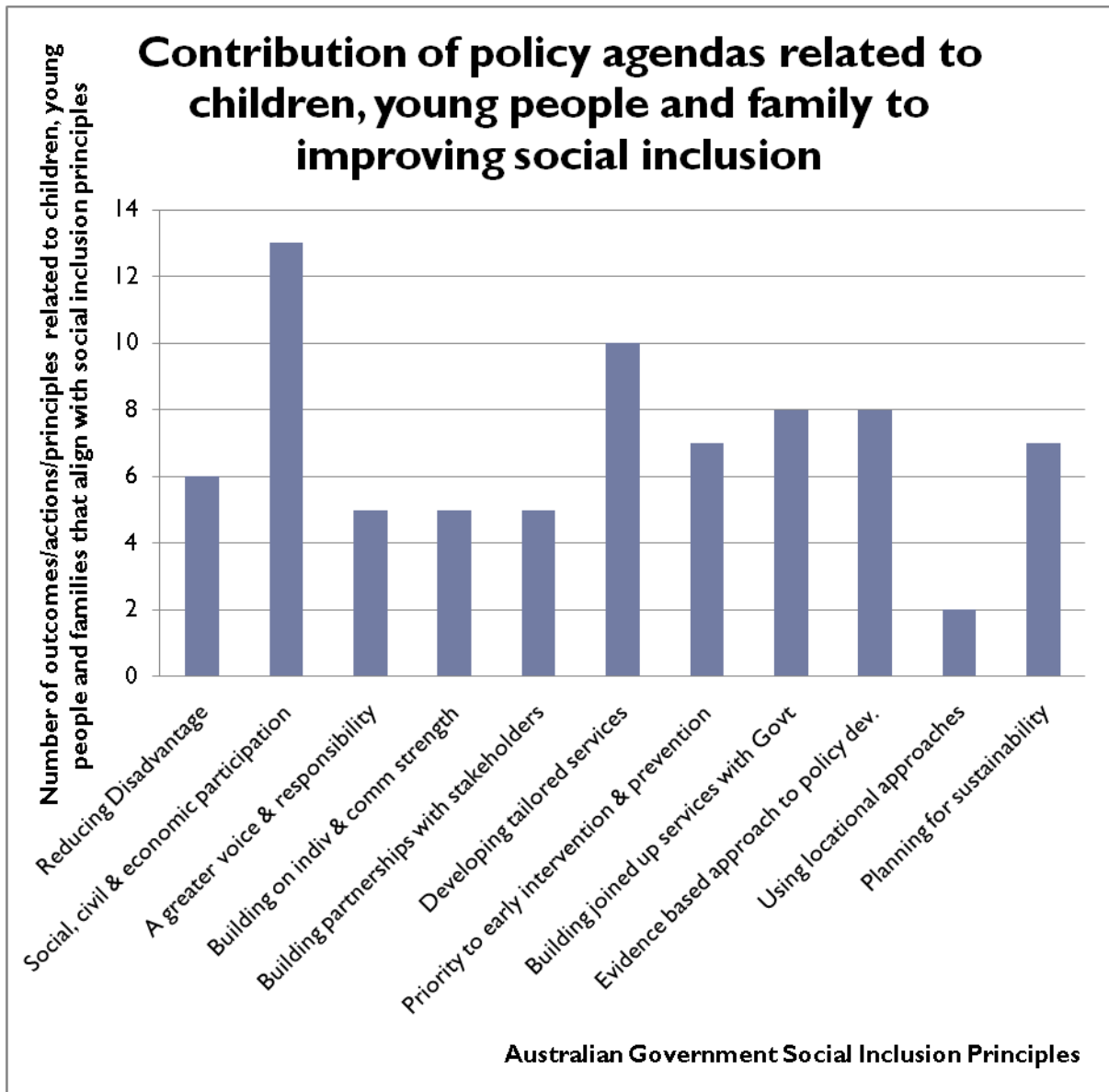
3.2 Alignment with Social Inclusion Agenda

In order to better understand the relationship between the Government's Social Inclusion Agenda and each of the key documents' outcomes, the principles of the social inclusion agenda were analysed in relation to each of the documents' outcomes (Appendix A). A few general observations are:

▶ *Protecting Children*, *Investing in the Early Years* and *The Road Home* include outcomes that align with SI's Principle 4 (Building on individual and community strengths)

▶ *Protecting Children*, *Investing in the Early Years*, *Youth Attainment* and *The Road Home* include actions addressing SI Principle 5 (To build partnerships with key stakeholders)

▶ All documents (except the *EYLF*) include actions addressing Principle 6 (Developing tailored services) and Principle 8 (Building joined-up services and whole-of-government solutions)

▶ The *EYLF* and *Youth Attainment* give little attention to Principle 7 (Giving high priority to early intervention and prevention) and Principle 9 (Using Evidence and integrated data to inform policy)

▶ *Protecting Children* and *Investing in the Early Years* are the only documents that include locational approaches (SI Principle 10)

▶ *Protecting Children*, *Investing in the Early Years* and *The Road Home* include actions to plan for sustainability (SI Principle 11)

▶ *Early Childhood* aligns with the most (10) SI Principles. The only SI Principle not addressed by *Early Childhood* is number 3 (A greater voice combined with greater responsibility)

▶ The *EYLF* is least aligned with the SI Principles; however it should be noted that the *EYLF* focuses on curriculum and pedagogy and is not geared toward the objectives of the SI Agenda

▶ Overall, the *EYLF*, *Reducing Violence* and *Youth Attainment* are least aligned with the Social Inclusion Agenda Principles.

A visual representation of the alignment and focus of effort against the Australian Government's social inclusion aspirations is provided below.

Contribution of policy agendas related to children, young people and family to improving social inclusion

Number of outcomes/actions/principles related to children, young people and families that align with social inclusion principles

Australian Government Social Inclusion Principle	Value
Reducing Disadvantage	6
Social, civil & economic participation	13
A greater voice & responsibility	5
Building on indiv & comm strength	5
Building partnerships with stakeholders	5
Developing tailored services	10
Priority to early intervention & prevention	7
Building joined up services with Govt	8
Evidence based approach to policy dev.	8
Using locational approaches	2
Planning for sustainability	7

Australian Government Social Inclusion Principles

This graph shows that the policy frameworks analysed here do align well with the social inclusion agenda. Overall, they focus most on the aspiration to increase economic, civil and social participation and provide more tailored services. If, in operationalising these policy reforms, we want to deliver better on social inclusion outcomes, some key areas for more effort are:

▸ Using locational approaches

▸ Enabling a greater voice and responsibility

▸ Building on individual and community strengths

▸ Building partnerships with stakeholders

▸ Reducing disadvantage

▸ Giving greater priority to early intervention and prevention in the life of problems, as well as early in the life-span.

3.3 Children's rights, agency and capabilities

Young people's rights, agency and capabilities are unevenly recognised and supported across the frameworks. The early years initiatives take a strong comprehensive view of children's rights to provision, protection and participation. Governments define themselves as having an obligation to provide universal services which are responsive and have multiple entry points for children, families and communities who have historically found services hard to use. The public health model which underpins these policy frameworks has a specific focus on seamless transitions from universal to targeted services (where this is needed for families and their children). This

contrasts most significantly with *Youth Attainment* where the obligation (and accountability) to 'participate' focuses on young people not on government provision of responsive and appropriate services (see discussion below).

Of all the documents the *EYLF* positions Australia's young people most strongly as capable and active citizens, offering the strongest challenge to views of young people as lacking in agency and skills. This stance is important as there is a significant literature (see for example Mason and Fattore, 2005) which argues that perceptions of young people as lacking in capability and agency contribute to their vulnerability.

3.4 Focus on primary, secondary and tertiary services

In the context of service systems, 'universal, targeted and specialist' are sometimes used synonymously with 'primary, secondary and tertiary', because these terms are thought to make explicit the populations for which different services are designed. However, these terms are not always interchangeable. The elements of the broad system of human services delivery are sometimes difficult to conceptualise in terms of public health (Smallbone et al, 2008). Moreover, the distinct responsibilities of different sectors in delivering services can be collapsed into public health models: schools, for example, tend to be described in these models primarily as an entry point for health and other service interventions rather than as educational institutions.

In this paper we have designated strategies as primary, secondary or tertiary, but the distinctions between them are not always clear. For example, Communities for Children and other Commonwealth programs that are designed to support all families within disadvantaged communities are defined as secondary interventions. Given that most of these interventions aim to strengthen links between all services, and often use universal services as a platform, they may be described in other contexts as primary (Cashmore et al., 2008).

One analytic strategy we adopted to assess the relative focus on primary, secondary and tertiary services was to categorise planned outcomes and strategies in terms of their intervention type. This approach is clearly an inexact measure for assessing

the weight given to different kinds of interventions. Frequency counts are only broadly indicative of the focus of the policy on primary, secondary and tertiary interventions: they do not, for example, give any idea of the relative cost or priority of the strategies. Systemic changes to statutory child protection services are enormously expensive, as is the deployment of federal police; while the development of social marketing and awareness campaigns are inexpensive and low-impact by design. However, the numbers do suggest that each of the documents under review (with the possible exception of *Youth Attainment*) include primary, secondary and tertiary interventions.

For example, *Protecting Children* has a strong focus on primary and secondary service systems, including a focus on better integration of services. This includes integration of:

▶ Primary and secondary services.

▶ Adult-focussed services such as alcohol and other drug treatment services, parents and child and family services.

▶ Services across government and non-government sectors and between state and Commonwealth jurisdictions.

If, however, the strategies are considered in terms of *universal* rather than *primary prevention* services, the focus of *Protecting Children* framework on targeted and specialist services becomes clearer: while universal services such as schools and health services do have a

place, there is little attention to strengthening the quality of these services, which is arguably one of the most important foundations of a universal service system for children and their families (early education and care is given greater prominence than these). Similarly, there is no space in the *Protecting Children* framework given to income support, nor what *Investing in the Early Years* describes as 'whole-of-government policy and planning to strengthen broader socio-economic supports for families'. Given the very strong association of child neglect and abuse with poverty, this absence is striking.

UnitingCare Australia, along with the other Major Church Providers of essential social services, has called for significant reform of the services and programs that aim to address deprivation, financial hardship and financial exclusion. We have called for increases in income support payments so people are not expected to live without access to those things that our community believes no Australian should have to go without, including:

- *Basic needs and capacities* – Warm clothes and bedding, if it's cold; a substantial meal at least once a day; computer skills;

- *Accommodation and domestic facilities* – a decent and secure home; a roof and gutters that do not leak; secure locks on doors & windows; heating in at least one room of the house; furniture in reasonable condition; a washing machine; a television;

- *Risk protection* – Up to $500 in savings for emergency; home contents insurance; comprehensive motor vehicle insurance;

- *Social participation* – Regular social contact with other people; a telephone; presents for family or friends each year; a week's holiday away from home each year;

- *Access to health care* – Medical treatment if needed; able to buy prescribed medicines; dental treatment if needed; and

- *Children's needs* – children can participate in school activities and outings; an annual dental check-up for children; a hobby or leisure activity for children; new schoolbooks and school clothes; a separate bed for each child; a separate bedroom for children aged 10 and over (Saunders and Wong, 2009).

Building a better response to the needs of people who face deprivation and hardship should be a core component and consideration of all parts of the service system that work with disadvantaged and vulnerable families. Financial health and wellbeing services need to be offered across a continuum of support integrated with other social services. They also need to be:

- Person centred, so people are supported in a way that respects their needs and priorities, and a case management approach should be used to ensure responses are relevant, holistic and co-ordinated.

- Configured so people can enter at any point in a continuum of services.

- Integrated, including partnerships between services that address a range of needs, for example, mental health, violence, addiction, newly arrived communities, and financial information and advocacy services, one stop shops, centres of excellence.

- Delivered through a variety of access points, including in settings where people are presenting for other support, for example, health system, housing services, banks, utility and telecommunications services.

- Targeted and promoted at critical times in the life-cycle and at high risk life events, for example, loss of job, default on mortgage, family breakdown.

- Of sufficient capacity to ensure people can access appropriate and comprehensive assessment, support and referral/follow-up.

As indicated in Section 3, secondary interventions in *Investing in the Early Years* include the strengthening of the capacity of homelessness, alcohol and other drug and mental health services for children and their families, and these align explicitly with area 3.5 under the *Protecting Children* framework. We did not identify any steps as analogous with tertiary interventions. Despite this, *Investing in the Early Years* aligns closely to a public health model in its mix of primary prevention (or universal) services and secondary (or targeted) interventions, including the use of universal services as a platform for the delivery of targeted services. The strategy combines primary interventions and the improvement of universal services, such as health systems and schools, with specific strategies for 'at-risk' and vulnerable children and families.

Collaboration between government and non-government sectors is identified, as is the development of referral pathways between universal and targeted services. The *EYLF* has a specific focus on pedagogy. Because of this, and because universal access to early education and care is a policy goal, this policy can be broadly classified in terms of a primary intervention in terms of a public health approach.

The Road Home also combines primary, secondary and tertiary interventions. Its focus on early intervention and prevention is broadly aligned with secondary interventions in public health terms, but it also identifies primary interventions. Perhaps the most significant of these is the provision of affordable housing. Like the *EYLF*, *Youth Attainment* does not identify tertiary interventions. However, unlike that framework, *Youth Attainment* does not suggest

significant changes to service systems or integrating universal and targeted interventions.

These reform agendas are being operationalised in diverse sectors, workforces and contexts. Whilst there may be good understanding in policy circles about implementing a public health approach to service delivery, there is not a consistent knowledge base or skill set about using this approach across policy implementation settings. Implementation of these reform agendas needs to incorporate clear advice, and further development of the evidence base for, the relative strengths of primary, secondary and tertiary interventions. On this basis, the workforce, funding bodies and program administrators could be better supported to build their knowledge and skills in implementing, monitoring and evaluating the methods and applicability of this approach.

3.5 At risk groups and priority areas

A number of groups are identified as at risk of perpetrating abuse and neglect against women and children (identified in *Protecting Children* and *Reducing Violence*) or at risk of experiencing neglect, abuse, homelessness or developmental problems (as identified in *The Road Home*, *Investing in the Early Years*, and *Youth Attainment*).

There are some groups that are not highly visible in these reform agendas. A critical gap from the UnitingCare perspective is identification and prioritising of the needs and aspirations of children and young people with disabilities, and their families.

While the outcomes between the documents do not always align, similar actions are identified to address challenges for at-risk groups. These actions fit into three broad themes, described below.

Linkages between services—*Protecting Children* and *Reducing Violence* both emphasise the importance of creating 'stronger links' and 'joint action' across services and professionals to address homelessness amongst youth aged 12 to 18 and women and children, respectively. This requires cross-service collaboration, and potentially collaboration at different levels of government. *Investing in Children* also includes a policy action to improve 'targeted support for innovative projects in service delivery, including establishing clear and accessible referral pathways between universal to targeted and intensive services'.

A good example of a program that enables cross-service collaboration is the *Reconnect* early intervention program for children and young people aged 12-18 who are at risk of homelessness.

This Federal government initiative works to reconnect children and young people with their families, with school, work and with the community. Service provision includes outreach family casework, counselling and mediation with families and teachers, camps, and brokerage to assist children and young people with accessing extracurricular activities.

Family-based casework is child-centred. The family works together to help the child or young person stay at home and engaged in the community. This way, the child or young person's needs are met in a way that contributes to long term change so that there is less likelihood of future problems.

Reconnect workers from UnitingCare Burnside in NSW highlight the critical component of interagency partnerships as a key to the success of the *Reconnect* programs. Co-operative referral networks ensure that children and young people do not fall through the cracks of service provision. They also believe that the program is effective because it is strengths-based. Families are asked what they want, and are assisted with finding the tools to achieve this.

Extending *Reconnect* to work with children and young people in the late primary school years would assist with successful transitions to high school and with family relationships during the transition to adolescence for many families.

Preventing transitions into homelessness – *Protecting Children* and *Reducing Violence* acknowledge that children, families and young people are at highest risk of homelessness during transition periods. In the case of *Protecting Children*, the strategy includes a 'no exit into homelessness' for young people leaving out-of-home care, which is also a stated policy goal in *Reducing Violence*. The plan's 'Safe at Home' program assists women and children to stay in their home following violence.

Targeted intervention services – In almost all of the key documents, there is a strong emphasis on improving service access for at-risk groups, either responsive services for children who have experienced abuse, neglect or require additional support; or prevention services for children and adults who are at-risk of experiencing homelessness, violence, or children prone to developmental issues.

The *Communities for Children* (C4C) program is a universally well regarded approach to service provision that enables locally relevant responses to the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable children and families.

Services across the UnitingCare network have seen fantastic outcomes from C4C programs, and one example is provided below:

North West Adelaide's Communities for Children (NW C4C) project has succeeded in implementing innovative and best practice programs, events and activities. This has been achieved by utilising a mix of Community Partners funded by North West Communities for Children, in kind support and collaboration with government and NGO's to deliver a truly integrated response that is place based, flexible, responsive and community lead.

With the provision of integrated activities, promotion between agencies and services has been increased and consolidated. An example of this is Seaton Central - the multidisciplinary team at Seaton Central provides professional support in a 'home like' environment, which is conducive to children's learning through supported play, whilst adults feel a sense of belonging and the ability to have fun and build relationships and community capacity. The bright ambience creates an atmosphere that invites families to join in through varying entry points, which effectively accommodates any family's level of vulnerability or social requirements.

From targeted groups, our families have the opportunity to be involved in other universal activities on a daily basis, depending on their day to day needs or abilities. The Seaton Central Team includes diverse professional skills including: Early Childhood Development, Community Development, Adult Education, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Child Protection, Primary Health, Children's Health, Mental Health, Special Education, Counselling, Psychology, Perinatal Health, Disabilities and Attachment.

Outcome 3 in *Protecting Children* (addressing risk factors for child abuse) includes strategies and actions that align with other policy outcomes, namely the expansion of integrated models of support for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence and to provide them with safe housing. This policy goal (and the importance of providing safe housing for vulnerable women and children) is shared by *Protecting Children*, *Reducing Violence*, *The Road Home* and *Investing in the Early Years*. For example, one of the *Investing in the Early Years* actions is to strengthen the capacity of adult-focused services, such as homelessness, mental health, and rehabilitation services in order to respond to the needs of young people.

However, there is a significant under-representation of children aged 8-14 years old in the policy agendas and implementation priorities. The implementation plans for these reform agendas would be strengthened significantly with:

▶ Explicit references to their needs and natural points of intervention.

▶ More specific reference to vulnerabilities and indicators of risk for children and young people in these age groups and how best to recognise and respond to them.

Uniting Care Wesley Adelaide provides programs to families with children and young adolescents through counselling, respite, mediation referral support and accommodation programs.

Respite programs for families enable structured space for all family members to assess their situation, and with the support of meditation, families are assisted in rebuilding relationships at their own pace. These programs are sustained through on-going support past crisis point.

Mary and Susan accessed this program after Mary decided that she loved her daughter but had tried everything and could no longer cope or keep her safe. The support worker discusses a range of options with Mary including counselling and respite accommodation.

During the program Susan spent some nights at home and some nights at the reunification house. The nights in the family home were gradually built up from three to seven nights over a four month period. During Susan's time at the reunification house she attended school as normal and had telephone contact with her mother. Mary was encouraged to telephone Susan daily and be heavily involved with the service via counselling, meetings, phone calls, visits, parent groups and coming in for dinner. Mary and Susan were both encouraged to ring the service from home should they engage in conflict that they felt needed independent support to resolve.

Mary and Susan feel that with the combination of regular space (from the structured respite) and the individual and family counselling; they have been able to move from crisis point to showing signs of relationship improvement. After the four month reunification/respite program the family still accesses occasional respite and continue with counselling

Indigenous Australians are identified as a priority in *Protecting Children*, as outlined in Outcome 5. The strategies and actions include increased capacity and integration of services, including expansion of integrated support services that align with strategies in *Reducing Violence* and *Investing in the Early Years*. For example, one of the policy actions is to link 35 Indigenous Child and Family Centres with the range of family and community programs for at-risk children. These services include child care and health services (linked to *Investing in the Early Years* and the *EYLF*) and enhanced parenting support (linked to *Protecting*

Children and *Reducing Violence*). New activities include the Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Program and the Indigenous Family Violence Regional Activities Program on child protection issues. Another action under Outcome 5 is to work with Aboriginal organisations to increase capacity and play and enhanced role in addressing issues, including children in out-of-home care, establishing Safe Houses within remote communities and providing Indigenous Alcohol Diversion Program for parents of children at-risk. These three policy actions align with risk factors in three of the other policy agendas (*Protecting Children*, *Reducing Violence* and *The Road Home*).

Uniting Care offer numerous services for Indigenous people. Parenting programs involve home visits, advocacy, referrals and group work, enabling clients to receive support in whichever method they feel the most comfortable. The differing programs provide Indigenous families with mutual support in a culturally inclusive setting.

At UnitingCare Wesley Port Adelaide there are several Family Programs which are focused on supporting Aboriginal families with young children in their parenting.

One is Taikurtinna Wiltarnendi while means 'Families becoming stronger' in the Kaurna Language and which has been ongoing for about 6 years. The staff of this program do intensive home visiting, case management, advocacy and group work to enable the parents or carers involved to better care for their children.

Another is a new program under the Indigenous Parenting Support Program and we call it Kurlakurlando which means 'youngest child, favourite' in the Kaurna Language. We mainly do group work and courses. The parents involved guide the type of courses that are offered. So far we have done the *Incredible Years Program*. This parenting course has been adapted for use by Aboriginal people and is delivered in partnership with Child, Adolescent Mental Health Service.

Aboriginal Women who have been consulted about this program are giving positive feedback and have expressed their desire to attend groups and courses such as *Paid to Play* which we have run twice with support from Seaton Central.

There has been lots of energy and enthusiasm from Mums at Alberton Primary School in setting up the *Nunga Baby Play* group which is an ongoing weekly group. Participants meet in the morning, often have a guest speaker, have lunch together and sometimes don't leave until 2pm. It's a chance to share ideas, relax and learn more about the importance of children's play and development and many other topics in a culturally appropriate environment.

We have also run a *Future Parents Program* for high school aged students in conjunction with Save the Children Fund and Oceanview College. It is for 12- 19 years olds who are parents or have caring responsibilities for children and are interested in good outcomes for children.

The Road Home is an important document for analysing how the Government's outcomes align because the issue of homelessness is a priority area in three of the policy agendas – *Protecting Children*, *Reducing Violence* and *Investing in the Early Years* (plus *The Road Home* itself). The other documents (*EYLF* and *Youth Attainment*) do not address homelessness in their agendas and action plans. While this is expected in the *EYLF* since the emphasis of the document is on pedagogy and curriculum for young children, there is a potential gap in *Youth Attainment*, as it is likely that the initiatives and commitments under the Agreement are targeted toward young people who are vulnerable to homelessness. *Protecting Children* includes support for youth to stay connected with education, training and employment as a strategy to reduce the risks of homelessness. This approach is used in *Youth Attainment,* where the governments have committed to providing education, training and employment opportunities for youth aged 15 to 24.

Youth Attainment does however, put the onus of responsibility firmly on the shoulders of young people and their families, in stark contrast to the approach in the early years which puts far more emphasis on supporting and enabling families, and expecting more of the community and the services system when people are disadvantaged vulnerable. Implementation of *Youth Attainment* has the potential to further marginalise young people already excluded from participation in the community and the economy. More focus needs to be given to ensuring disadvantaged and vulnerable young people get the right support, early and for long enough, to enable them to reach their potential to contribute to the future of Australia.

One example of this sort of program is described below:

Kuitpo Community provides a residential (therapeutic) community that assists adults over 21 years to develop skills to cope with alcohol and other drug abuse issues. Kuitpo is an integrated service providing: alcohol and other drug, mental health and housing support. This support is provided though services such as a visiting Doctor, visiting teacher, child care worker, counsellors, visiting Centrelink Officer, group and community workers, transitional housing, transition support workers and referrals to youth and parent counselling and other services.

Kuitpo has a Family Program that allows for single parents who have children, primary age or younger, to access the program with the children in their care. The Family Program enables single parents, who would otherwise not enter a residential drug and alcohol program to engage in rehabilitation as they are able to bring their children with them.

3.6 Investment in capacity building and integration

The key documents focus on capacity building and integration of services to varying levels.

▶ In *Protecting Children*, almost one-third of the strategies to achieve the outcomes are accompanied by capacity building actions. Eight of the strategies include partnership and/or integration actions.

▶ Of the 30 identified actions in *Investing in the Early Years*, 8 address the need to build partnerships across sectors and services and better integrate service design and delivery and a further 8 aim to increase the capacity of services and resources.

▶ There are 20 identified actions to achieve the outcomes of *Reducing Violence*, of which 4 focus on capacity building and 3 on building partnerships and integration of services.

▶ There are 36 identified actions (based on the 'where we will start' initiatives) outlined in *The Road Home*, which support one of the three strategies to achieve the ten guiding principles.

Eleven of these actions focus on capacity building and 7 on partnerships and integration of services.

▶ The *EYLF* does not identify actions and strategies in the same way the other documents do. The Principles component of the *EYLF* does include a focus on partnerships with all people involved in children's learning, including parents, teachers, other professionals and the community.

▶ In *Youth Attainment*, there are 17 indicative actions that accompany the three (engagement and participation combined) outcomes. Of these, five focus on building partnerships and collaboration between government, community, businesses and families and six focus on building capacity by creating more opportunity and access to programs.

One of the priority areas that is prevalent across the key documents is the issue of improving access to services, by building capacity and stronger links and integration between services. *Protecting Children*, *Reducing Violence* and *The Road Home* all emphasise the importance of creating 'stronger links' and 'joint action' across services and professionals to address homelessness amongst youth aged 12 to 18 and women and children, respectively. This requires cross-service collaboration, and potentially collaboration at different levels of government.

Governments can take a lead role in enabling services to develop and improve refine their service models that meet the needs of specific target groups in local communities. UnitingCare services across Australia support the call for greater investment in capacity building initiatives to support services.

Services in the UnitingCare network that are funded through the Family Support Program have suggested the following initiatives would support this aspiration:

● Developing state and regional maps of service options and reach

● Providing project liaison positions to facilitate co-ordination and collaboration across FSP service network and with other relevant service systems (e.g. state/territory-based substance use, mental health, care and protection)

● Developing MOU's for service delivery linkages, outreach opportunities, collaborative practices and referrals.

Better alignment across programs, reduced duplication and a 'no wrong door' approach to service access would be achieved by:

● Access points for families and service system staff to access information and advocacy re services available.

● A Common Assessment Tool which is inclusive of all client groups and used across the FSP by all services.

● Common data collection and aggregation platforms.

● Resource sharing including offices, administrative processes, workers, information and advice products.

As noted above, the content, purpose and intended use of indicators and outcome measures are not consistent across the policies analysed. A key concern identified through this analysis is the potential impact on service providers of these diverse data collection requirements. In social service provision, data collection is already complicated, poorly aligned across programs, portfolios and jurisdictions and aggregated data and analysis is not disseminated openly or in a timely way.

Queensland's data collection initiative

These challenges have been acknowledged by the Queensland State government and they are working with the social services sector to simplify data collection and develop better ways of sharing and using data and evaluations so they can inform service development and reform. Under the auspices of the Queensland Compact and the Compact Governance Committee's Action Plan non-government social service providers and relevant parts of the Queensland Government are looking at providing more open and more timely access to data collected from service providers and aggregated by government. They are also working to develop principles regarding: the collection and storage of information; the sharing and release of information and the use of data.

There is not a strong emphasis on providing additional resources to ensure the capacity of services to respond to existing unmet demand or additional demand. Nor is there sufficient focus on providing sufficient resources to ensure partnerships and collaboration are enabled, and used more frequently and effectively.

Often successful programs do not continue due to lack of funding, and programs on short term funding are not able to adequately plan for future sustainability. This results in high staff turnover, loss of intellectual capital and poor program delivery. The ultimate cost is inconsistent case management and case work and diminishing outcomes for clients.

The Productivity Commission's (2009) draft report on the contribution of the not-for-profit sector has identified a number of reforms to service funding relevant to implementation of these policy agendas:

- The length of service agreements and contracts should reflect the length of the period required to achieve agreed outcomes rather than having arbitrary or standard contract periods.

- When entering into service agreements and contracts for the delivery of services, government agencies should develop an explicit risk management framework in consultation with providers.

- Australian governments should urgently review and streamline their tendering, contracting, reporting and acquittal requirements in the provision of services to reduce compliance costs. To reduce the current need to verify the provider's corporate or financial health on multiple occasions, even within the same agency, reviews should include consideration of: development of Master Agreements that are fit-for-purpose, at least at a whole-of-agency level; and use of pre-qualifying panels of service providers.

The success of the reform agenda rests on being able to get better outcomes from existing investments, as well as targeted additional investments in priority areas. It is important to acknowledge that services are currently unable to meet existing demand for support: ACOSS (2009) reports that respondent agencies to the most recent community sector survey turned away 278,107 people who were eligible for a service, an increase of 17 per cent on the 237,024 turned away in 2006-7. As service systems become more able to recognise and respond to the needs of children, young people and families, it is reasonable to expect that demand for services will increase, especially in the short term. In fact, this is the stated aim in many parts of the reform agendas. Even with additional investments, without significant changes in the way services are funded, and to the compliance and

reporting regimes for that funding, the aspirations of these ambitious reforms will not be realised.

Services from across the UnitingCare network seek the following administrative reforms that we believe will enable delivery of better services and supports for the people and communities that are the intended beneficiaries of these reforms.

- Full funding to meet the actual cost of providing appropriate assessment, support, referrals and follow-up.

- Financial support for developing, managing and sustaining cross-service partnerships.

- Recognition and remuneration for the differences in costs associated with setting (for example specialised or general service), location (rural and especially remote have higher costs associated with travel and accessing expert staff), staffing mix (paid and volunteers) or demographics (level and complexity of need).

- Adequate funding to cover remuneration of the workforce, recognising skills shortages and the need to retain and further develop the capacity of the social services workforce, for example, funding for staff development.

- Funding to support management of volunteers.

- Simplified and less costly processes for seeking and selecting service providers.

- Consolidation of funding sources across government portfolios prior to allocation to a service providers, at the very least we seek consolidation of funding for programs managed within portfolios, for example via a header agreement.

- Simplification and alignment of funding reporting and compliance requirements.

- Reform of development and implementation of regulatory frameworks to take better account of the cumulative impacts and cost implications for service providers affected by multiple levels and types of regulation.

Across sectors, there a number of groups of professionals whose roles and responsibilities involve protecting children's wellbeing and safety and developing their learning and life course opportunities. In order to effectively achieve the goals of *Protecting Children*, professional groups must collaborate and

implement consistent approaches across sectors and at different levels of service delivery. In each of the key reform agendas, workforce development strategies are identified for different groups of professionals. The Framework indicates statutory workers and non-government services workers, as well as voluntary carers are a high priority (*Protecting Children*, p25).

Two main approaches to workforce development are evident in four of the key reform agendas:

1. **Interdisciplinary training** – *Investing in the Early Years* contains the vision that services are delivered by an 'appropriately qualified and inter-disciplinary workforce according to robust quality assurance processes' (p17). It acknowledges that optimal service delivery is achieved by using three service levels (universal, targeted and intensive), which are integrated across the service sectors (health, education, family support) (p18). While *Investing in the Early Years* states the importance of all children accessing universal services, it also suggests that different layers of service delivery must work together to provide seamless pathways between each service layer. This requires significant collaboration between different sectors' and services' workforces and interdisciplinary training. If such a seamless system is effectively implemented, children using universal early childhood services at risk of abuse and neglect would have a greater chance of receiving early intervention and prevention services. Similarly, it will be easier for children already in the child protection system to access targeted or universal services. *Reducing Violence* also includes a multi-disciplinary training package for lawyers, judicial officers, counsellors, and other professionals working in family law system.

2. **Collaboration and partnerships** – The focus on the professional in the *EYLF* is on the importance of forming partnerships between educators, families and support professionals. There are not explicit workforce development elements to the *EYLF*, but there is an emphasis on using this knowledge to work in partnership with other services and agencies (p13). These cross-agency partnerships are important for linking at-risk families with preventative or responsive child protection services. Also, *Investing in the Early Years* states that services

need to improve the inclusiveness of services, including 'integration where services and professionals across health, early childhood education and care, family support and specialists work very closely together, regardless of whether they are co-located or not' (p12). And one of *The Road Home*'s guiding principles is a 'national commitment, strong leadership and cooperation from all levels of government and business sectors' (Principle 1).

The workforce development initiatives and strategies included in the key reform agendas are largely limited to *Investing in the Early Years* and *Reducing Violence.*

Improving the workforce participation of women previously at home in caring roles has the potential to deliver improved economic participation for women, improved incomes for themselves and their families, and will activate people previously excluded from the labour market to contribute to addressing workforce and skills shortages in the social services sector. Initiatives to create and maintain stable employment opportunities must concurrently address both the barriers to unemployment and the factors that sustain employment:

- Facilitate access to affordable childcare that is close to home and out of regular work hours. Sole parents need accessible and affordable childcare whether parents are in paid employment, volunteering or undertaking training.

- Cater for the needs of parents with children and young people who have special needs. Some parents may require additional support in obtaining flexible employment to enable them to prioritise their children's needs (for example, the need for frequent visits to medical practitioners).

- Provide support for start up costs for parents returning to work.

- Provide financial contributions for training to improve access to better paid jobs with training opportunities and regular working hours.

- Ensure the Centrelink system makes income declaration and reconciliation simple and less likely to penalise benefit recipients for income earned through work.

4. Summaries and individual document analysis

4.1 Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009 – 2020

Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 (*Protecting Children*) addresses issues of child neglect, abuse and safety for Australia's children. Guided by principles under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), *Protecting Children* establishes six outcomes to be achieved, which are accompanied by specific strategies to achieve the outcomes. Importantly, this Framework explicitly places child protection with the context of child wellbeing and broader family and community factors that influence children's safety and wellbeing.

Attention is given to the current situation of child abuse, neglect and safety and the recent trends relating to these issues in Australia. An overview of the current system and the processes for addressing these issues, in addition to a recommended service structure for delivering these outcomes, incorporates the different parties involved, their roles and responsibilities, and the necessity for collaboration and family and community involvement.

Supporting outcomes

1. *Children live in safe and supportive families and communities*

This outcome emphasises a shared responsibility for child protection, and the role of business and communities in supporting families. This goal also supports 'upholding children's right to participate in decisions that affect them is a key signal of valuing and supporting children' (p15).

2. *Children and families access adequate support to promote safety and intervene early*

This outcome is supported by government provision of funding, services and targeted programs to ensure that families and children can access necessary support to keep children 'safe and well' and provide advice to parents and families who require additional assistance in delivering proper care to their children. Ensuring

these programs and services are available and accessible will reduce later demand on the State for children to enter child protection systems.

3. *Risk factors for child abuse and neglect are addressed*

Research and studies have found that specific factors relating to parental (often maternal) characteristics and domestic issues (such as drug abuse and violence) increase the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. Other children at greater risk are those that face broader social exclusion and experience disadvantage due to unstable accommodation, income poverty, and childhood disability or mental health issues. In order to support children and families to reduce neglect and abuse, we need to ensure that existing and new support and programs to families experiencing issues are effectively addressing these root causes.

4. *Children who have been abused or neglected receive the support and care they need for their safety and wellbeing*

In cases where parents are unable to provide adequate care and protection for their children, the appropriate system measures must be in place to provide the services and support for children through the transition into out-of-home care arrangements, during and through the years after leaving out-of-home care. These services and supports include providing high quality foster carers, and also necessary services and programs to ensure a sense of 'security, stability, continuity and social support' (p25).

5. *Indigenous children are supported and safe in their families and communities*

In line with the framework's commitment to decrease risk and improve the protection and care of disadvantaged children, one of the outcomes supports Indigenous children, who have experienced greater risk of abuse and neglect. The strategies include increasing access to mainstream programs and services

for families and children, promoting strong Indigenous communities and, where necessary, delivering culturally appropriate and sensitive care arrangements for children entering out-of-home care arrangements.

6. *Child sexual abuse and exploitation is prevented and survivors receive adequate support*

One of the specific forms of child abuse is sexual abuse and exploitation, which has been established as a targeted issue of the framework. Strategies to decrease the risk of sexual abuse include community awareness and increased supervision of children. *Protecting Children* also indicates that sexual abuse is more common under particular family and domestic circumstances, including highly sexualised environments and in violent households. In cases where this type of abuse and exploitation is not

prevented early, there are severe legal implications requiring Commonwealth action at the judicial level and the provision of necessary support services to children to improve their wellbeing and life chances.

Implementing the framework

The framework emphasises the role that all government levels and sectors can play to better achieve goals of prevention and early intervention. Four formal mechanisms are outlined, which will work together to assess progress and alter the three-year plans as necessary.

In addition to the formal governance mechanisms there will be a series of working groups, with members from government and non-government organisations.

Responsible body	Who is involved	Actions and responsibilities
Community and Disability Services Ministers' Conference (CDSMC)	Community and Disability Services Ministers	Reports annually to COAG on progress Provides further action plans for consideration
Ministerial Forum on Protecting Australia's Children	Ministers with responsibilities under Framework Will invite contributions from non-government representatives	Advice and feedback to COAG via CDSMC
Community and Disability Services Ministers' Advisory Committee (CDSMAC)	Works with the Community and Disability Services Ministers Conference representatives	Manage the Framework
National Framework Advisory Committee	CDSMAC and representatives from other sectors, including non-government, academic, children	Advise on the operation of the National Framework

Document analysis

Children's rights, agency and capabilities

Protecting Children is underpinned by Australia's commitment to the UNCRC and primarily emphasises children's rights to safe communities and protection. A key tenet of the strategy is that children are best supported by 'building capacity and strength in our families and communities, across the nation' (p.6). A raft of initiatives extend children's services to be more family focused (Outcome 1.1) and focus on building

infrastructure and social capital in disadvantaged communities. Community education campaigns recognise the importance of community attitudes to about young people.

There is a tension in the framework's approach to children's active participation in matters that affect them. This concept is most concretely operationalised once families have broken down and young people come into contact with the statutory system. For

example Outcome 1.3 states: 'Develop and implement effective mechanisms for involving children and young people in decisions affecting their lives.' The initial 3–year actions which accompany this outcome relate to children's active participation at the point they separate from their families. When young people are positioned in the domain of the family, initiatives target the family as the conduit through which young people's well-being is attained.

UnitingCare services work with children caught in circumstances where they have limited capacity to influence decisions about their lives. Uniting Care, where they can, advocate for who people who want a stronger voice in legal proceedings:

Anna, a 12 year old girl in counselling, disclosed that she did not want to see her father. The Family Court said that she must see him every weekend. She said that people from Families SA had investigated and found that there was no abuse occurring so she had to see him. Anna was upset and stated that she did not want to go and also said, 'I'll just have to put up with it until I'm old enough that I don't have to'. Anna's story shows a lack of 'Child focus' in these proceedings. She does not believe her wishes have been taken into account the child's wishes or that the adults involved are working with her to understand her worries and concerns during the Family Court process.

Anna was left feeling powerless and having to endure the consequences of a decision she could not influence.

It is useful to note that young people's active participation and capabilities have been emphasised in the framework development itself, as they have been involved at an advisory level in the development of the framework and their perceptions of their value in the community is included as one of the indicators of change.

Focus on primary, secondary and tertiary services

Protecting Children lists a total of 75 strategies, of which we classified 55 into primary, secondary, tertiary or some combination of the three (commitments to investigate policy and legislative changes; and research, data and evaluation strategies were among those not classified). We classified 13 strategies as equivalent to primary interventions, four as both

primary and secondary, thirty as secondary, one as both secondary and tertiary (changes to statutory child protection systems for children at both serious and lower risk of harm) and nine as tertiary.

Primary interventions include the implementation of a national approach to early childhood education and care (which aligns directly to the early *EYLF* and the early childhood development framework); the *National Binge Drinking Strategy* and a national screening program for perinatal depression. Interventions classified as primary and secondary include the plan to 'link 35 Indigenous Child and Family Centres with the range of family and community programs for at-risk children', which will be 'integrated into existing platforms such as child care centres, schools, Aboriginal health centres and other related services'.

Secondary interventions include both interventions targeted at specific risk groups and universal services within disadvantaged communities. Specified risk groups include those at risk of or experiencing family violence (which aligns directly to *Reducing Violence*) and homelessness. Targeted interventions are also designed for vulnerable groups (not at risk of perpetrating child abuse or neglect), including children in, and transitioning from, out-of-home care and grandparents raising their grandchildren. Tertiary services include the Northern Territory Emergency Response (Mobile Child Protection Team, specialist AFP officers, safe houses), reforms to statutory child protection services and the *Personal Helpers and Mentors Program* (also a part of *The Road Home*).

A positive example of secondary interventions is provided from a Tasmanian UnitingCare service that has been working closely with grandparents to assist them with their role as carers of children.

Our family support program worked with a grandmother that had been staying with her daughter and her family for 18 months. The family had been having a difficult time and the grandmother moved in with them to help out. Over time she had become the main carer for 5 children from 6-12yrs and had taken on primary responsibility for running the large house. The grandmother was feeling isolated, overloaded, exhausted and distressed.

The father was in the criminal justice system. The family has been struggling with two children with

disabilities that had not been accessing respite. Some of the children had challenging behaviours. The family had also been harassed by people living close by and Restraint Orders were not being complied with. These neighbourhood problems included a house break in at one point.

At the time of first contact the grandmother had not slept properly for months.

The initial service response was telephone contact, as initiated by the grandmother, about what was happening and the service would provide support and suggestions. The service also provided home visits to talk with both the grandmother and her daughter.

Through this initial engagement, the family support worker was able to build trust and facilitate links with a disability respite service, advocacy and information service, mental health services, a Carers respite centre, parent support and the Victims of Crime service. The family support worker was also able to begin a conversation about accessing mental health support via the family GP.

The family were then able to access case management and case conferencing support, to assist with co-ordinating the multiple services that are working with them to meet their needs.

With support now provided to the family, the grandmother has been able to go home and instead visit for a few days at a time. This has enabled her to sustain her support role and has reduced the risk of this family entering the care and protection system.

At risk groups and priority areas

Protecting Children's Outcome 3 specifically addresses relevant risk factors for child neglect and abuse. Includes initiatives addressing:

▶ Drug and alcohol abuse
▶ Mental health issues
▶ Family violence
▶ Housing and homelessness

At UnitingCare Community Options in Victoria, staff have developed a model of policy and program delivery that could address the needs of deeply excluded families.

This service model offers support along two pathways out of exclusion. One essential pathway seeks to

address the forces that create exclusion in the first place. A second pathway lies in the development of services tailored to the specific needs of these families.

Pathway 1: tackling the forces that create exclusion

• Reduce long term unemployment
• Reduce poverty
• Eradicate homelessness
• Tackle educational disadvantage in parents and children
• Provide early intervention and prevention targeted to excluded families.

Pathway 2: Development of services tailored to the specific needs of excluded families

• Strengthened casework: highly experienced, skilled and knowledgeable staff, paid accordingly to attract and keep the best possible staff.
• Salaries for professional staff need to be equivalent to those paid to clinical psychologists, social workers in the hospital system, or 10 year experienced teachers. Staff need to have maximum caseloads of 1 worker to 5 excluded families, so that each excluded family can expect one day of their worker's time per week. This allows for the intensity of intervention needed by excluded families.

Protecting Children identifies unstable family accommodation (often as a result of family violence, mental health issues or drug and alcohol use) and homelessness as key risk factors associated with abuse and neglect toward children. Outcome 2 includes actions to increase the availability and affordability of social housing for families and children at-risk. One of these actions is the enhancement of services and supports for children and families to target the most vulnerable and protect children at-risk, which will be supported by the Commonwealth's Family Support Program (Outcome 2.4).

Another priority group is children leaving out-of-home care, and Outcome 4 includes strategies to improve support for young people leaving care (4.3). Homelessness is identified as the primary vulnerability for this group and a 'no exits into homelessness' is being implemented as part of the *National Partnership on Homelessness* (p27).

UnitingCare supports the adoption by governments of the Out-of-Home-Care Guarantee. This Guarantee

has been developed by the *Every Kid Coalition* in consultation with young people and the CREATE Foundation, and is endorsed by the non-government sector in New South Wales. The Guarantee articulates what every child and young person involved in out-of-home-care should be able to access in terms of:

▶ Health
▶ Education
▶ Transition to independence
▶ Interests and opportunities

The Guarantee also recognises that young people living in out-of-home-care need services and supports that provide them with the best chance of a successful transition to adulthood. These include:

1. The help and support to live independently

   Life skills education as a standard experience for 15 and 17 year olds (for example budgeting, cooking).

2. A place to live that meets their needs

   The right to safe, secure and affordable housing in an appropriate location, close to transport and education/employment opportunities

   Sufficient financial support with establishment expenses.

3. Help to continue education, training and/or move into employment

   Access to a place in TAFE or financial support to access a university course (for example scholarships)

   Continued access to funds while in further education and training

   Additional support to assist in entering the workforce - including careers advice, developing work readiness skills, and mentoring

   Assistance to change career path if necessary.

Indigenous families are also identified as a high risk group, and support for this group is outlined in Outcome 5. A commitment is made to strengthening Indigenous communities by improving access to services that are delivered in a culturally appropriate way.

It should be noted that, while alcohol abuse is identified as a risk factor in Outcome 3, and discussed through the document as a key risk factor in many communities, the only national action addressing this issue is the implementation of the *National Binge Drinking Strategy*.

Investment in capacity building and integration

Three initiatives under Outcome 2 address the need to increase investment to improve capacity. These are increased funding for disadvantaged schools with a focus on improving student wellbeing (through the Low SES School Communities National Partnership); the expansion of targeted support programs for at-risk families, and the implementation of the *National Perinatal Depression Plan* that includes a national universal screening program. Additional capacity building investments include expanding access to mental health programs for children, including funding for Headspace, *MindMatters* and *ChildrenMatter*. Additional investment in research and evaluation will improve monitoring and development capacity and increase integration across all levels of government. These strategies and actions primarily support Outcome 4. *Protecting Children* also focuses on investment in services and programs for Indigenous families and children. Strategies in Outcome 5 include the expansion of Indigenous Parenting Support Services and linking the 35 Indigenous Child and Family Centres with a range of family and community programs. The latter action supports the integration and coordination of service delivery. Initiatives to address the workforce capacity of Indigenous care and protection services include funding support for Indigenous organisations in the States and Territories.

There are also a number of initiatives in *Protecting Children* that reflect an investment in improved collaboration among sectors and governments and integration of service delivery. Outcome 2 includes an action to implement integrated and co-located child and family service models. These include 35 Indigenous Child and Family Centres across the country and specific early intervention programs in six of the States and Territories. This outcome also suggests that new information sharing arrangements be established between NGOs and government agencies through the Common Approach to Assessment, Referral and Support Taskforce. This initiative is to be delivered through the Commonwealth Government and ARACY in partnership with States and Territories and NGOs.

Outcome 6, focusing on prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation, focuses on investment in collaborative practices across States' and Territories' governments and service providers (6.2).

There are significant resource implications for services seeking to work more collaboratively. The experience of Orana Family Service, a UnitingCare agency in Victoria, illustrates this:

The impact and cost implications for agencies to participate in partnership approaches are significant, although there are recognised benefits for agencies and families in working in a highly collaborative model. The capacity to sustain such approaches over the longer term is uncertain - significant time and resource costs associated with participating in collaborative partnerships are not included in the 'Unit price' received from Government.

Resourcing partnering is a struggle particularly for small to medium size agencies, especially in the context of increasing compliance costs and infrastructure needs (such as sophisticated IT systems) that are placing additional administrative and financial burdens on agencies.

The partner organisations of the Hume-Moreland Integrated Family Service Alliance are collectively responsible for the development, monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement of the HMIFS Catchment Operating Model (known as HMIFS), designed to deliver these objectives and the agreed project outcomes.

The level of cooperation, joint planning and shared action required to successfully deliver the strengthened and more effective child and family services operating model in Hume and Moreland requires organisations to allocate additional time and other resources to ensure they are mutually accountable to each other for:

- The project performance, success and outcomes in a planned, responsive and timely manner.

- The project performance, success and outcomes in a planned, responsive and timely manner.

- Effective representation and participation of all member organizations.

- Collaborative service delivery and decision making.

- Transparent data sharing through agreed data collection mechanisms to enable collation of data reporting framework to fulfil reporting requirements.

- Transparent information sharing about operations and compliance with registration standards and any adverse or advantageous impacts in order to facilitate and support quality improvement and management of risk within the partnership arrangements, and to protect and promote the overall performance and reputations of the partner organizations.

- Keeping partner agencies informed of any variations in their operational capability to provide services in accordance with commitments in the HMIFS Catchment Operating Model and agreed policies and processes outlined in the HMIFS Operations Manual.

The HMIFS Alliance is not a legal entity. Each organisation in the HMIFS Alliance is an independently constituted organisation and retains responsibility and accountability for the management, organisation and delivery of its services. This includes responsibility for the management of risk in the day to day operations in each organisation. Legal liability within the HMIFS Alliance is also therefore retained by the individual organisations.

As a result, HMIFS partner agencies have a dual set of responsibilities and accountabilities that need to be simultaneously managed, reported on and evaluated. This includes the need to negotiate solutions to the problems that may arise between organisations dealing with dual responsibilities and accountabilities of simultaneously being an independently constituted agency and an active member of a highly collaborative partnership based on interdependency and mutual accountability for agreed project outcomes.

Protecting Children does not include any specific workforce development initiatives for the care or professional workforce, but acknowledges the importance of a skilled workforce and indicates that a 'comprehensive workforce development plan has been developed comprising attraction and retention strategies, role and position redesign, and enhanced quality assurance systems' (p64).

The Framework also includes strategies to increase capacity and collaboration with communities, families and individuals to help achieve the framework's outcomes. For example, Outcome 1 includes support for community organisations to deliver awareness campaigns on issues such as child protection and child and family abuse.

4.2 Investing in the Early Years – A National Early Childhood Development Strategy

Vision: 'By 2020 all children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation'.

Investing in the Early Years references the UNCRC and Australia's 'longstanding commitment to nurture and protect children in our society' (p7).

Investing in the Early Years builds on earlier COAG commitments from 2008 that involved Commonwealth and State commitments to provide universal early childhood services (preschools) to all children in the year before they enter formal schooling. The strategy reflects the evidence from which the goals are based, illustrating that the costs of providing quality care are outweighed by the benefits to the child, community and society. The strategy is supported by research on the importance of the early years for the social, emotional and cognitive development of children. Specific reference is made to the importance of providing early childhood services to *all* children in order to reduce inequalities and outcomes between groups of children and therefore increased social inclusion (p4). Indigenous children are targeted with references made to the current gap in achievements between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children. In addition to the inclusiveness of *Investing in the Early Years*, the *National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Education* and the 'Closing the Gap' initiative are also closely connected to the outcomes of the strategy (p5).

A need for action and increased investment is a further supported by 'unacceptable levels of substantiated child abuse' as a concern for children who are not doing well (p10). Further it states there is a need for the 'right mix of universal and targeted services to both improve outcomes for all children and ensure that additional assistance is provided in a timely way to those that need it' (p12).

Policy objectives (outcomes) are identified under two categories - the child and the family

1. Children are born and remain healthy

2. Children's environments are nurturing, culturally appropriate and safe

3. Children have the knowledge and skills for life and learning

4. Children benefit from better social inclusion and reduced disadvantage, especially Indigenous children

5. Children are engaged in and benefiting from educational opportunities

6. Families are confident and have the capabilities to support their children's development

7. Quality early childhood development services that support the workforce participation choices of families

Action areas

Support for children, parents, carers and communities

This action area of the *Investing in the Early Years* strategy acknowledges the necessity for children to grow up in a healthy and nurturing family and community involvement in order to ensure positive early development. Such an environment must be absent of neglect, abuse and violence and provide the necessary supports through community services for the child and family.

Specifically, parents and carers need access to appropriate services to assist them in the critical role of supporting their children. This includes good mental and physical health, shelter and economic stability for food and health, socially connected to others and being a positive role model for children.

Also, child and family-friendly communities contribute to safe environments for children, encourage active play, foster a positive sense of cultural identity for children, promote supportive relationships and provide access to a range of services and facilities

Responsive early childhood development services

Investing in the Early Years is supportive of strong services that are responsive to the needs of children and families. There is an emphasis on engaging families and the community in the prevention of issues arising concerning child protection and safety. The Strategy's

proposed service model to address issues is in line with *Protecting Children*, where responsive early childhood development services 'optimise the use of three service layers: universal, targeted and intensive' (p17). Using this structure, identification of risks regarding either the child's protection and family environment or development issues, can be detected early and addressed initially through universal and co-ordinated services. This model also allows for flexibility in referring children and families to required services - whether from intensive family services addressing child protection risks to universal health services; or from targeted early childhood education services to intensive case management services where a child is experiencing neglect or abuse (p18).

Workforce leadership development

Investing in the Early Years acknowledges the importance of having a diversely qualified early childhood workforce, where early childhood teachers, child care workers, midwives, child and family health nurses, general practitioners, Aboriginal health workers, paediatricians, social workers, speech therapists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists may work together to provide services within an integrated service. Such diversity allows for children's health, wellbeing and development to be assessed at a universal service level. This priority action area also indicates the importance of having a multicultural workforce that reflects the composition of the local community, as this will better service local needs and encourage accessibility by all families.

Quality and regulation

A major component of *Investing in the Early Years* is the importance of measure to improve the consistency of quality standards across the States. Meeting structural standards such as carers' qualifications and staff to child ratios and complying with accreditation standards are widely understood as the keys to quality. Other important aspects of early development are process qualities, which include engaging environments for children, strong relationships between professionals and children and their families. *Establishing these partnerships at the universal service level also provides a greater ability for care professionals to detect and prevent potential risks or harms children may have.* Given the powerful evidence about the importance of the early years of life, it is imperative that standards be harmonised 'up' rather than shifted down to the

lowest common level. Quality needs to be a feature of universal services – not something reserved for those who can afford it.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure is important for the design and delivery of services, including early childhood education programs, to ensure that quality standards are met and programs are accessible to all, especially children from disadvantaged groups.

Governance and funding

The strategy acknowledges the importance of implementing effective governance and funding arrangements in order to achieve the early childhood development goals. The complex mechanisms, established largely through federal funding and state delivery, must be coordinated across government sectors and non-government organisations without imposing too much burden on the providers themselves.

Knowledge management and innovation

Research and monitoring are important to know how children are doing relative to identified development indicators, and in order to develop and improve policy goals and strategies. The strategy includes a research and monitoring component in order to collect data and information to better inform the progress of the strategy and the plans for the future.

Implementation plan and steps to address gaps

Investing in the Early Years identifies gaps in attaining the vision of all children to have the best start in life by 2020. The steps proposed to address these gaps are relevant to the early development and also broader protection of children. The **reform priorities** to address the gaps are:

▶ Strengthen universal, maternal, child and family health services.

▶ Support for vulnerable children.

▶ Engaging parents and community in understanding the importance of early childhood.

▶ Improve early childhood infrastructure.

▶ Building parent and community understanding of the importance of early childhood development.

- Strengthen the workforce across early childhood development and family support services.

- Build better information and a solid evidence base.

The first two priorities (strengthen universal services and support of vulnerable children) and the fourth (build parent and community understanding of the importance of early childhood development) gaps identified are particularly important with respect to the attainment of the Protecting Children framework outcomes and are also supported by the framework's strategies.

Document analysis

Children's rights, agency and capabilities

Investing in the Early Years is an overarching whole of system strategy and focuses on the coordination of different elements of the early years service system. The strategy is underpinned by Australia's commitment to the UNCRC *(p7)*. The strategy is informed by a public health model which builds on universal provision of services and supports for all families. The strategy contains gaps in universal provision, namely between the provision of pre-and post-natal health services and access to 15 hours per week pre-school education in the year before school. That is, between the ages of 12 months and four years there is no specific universal program to engage with and support families of young children. Participation in this overarching strategy is generally conceptualised in terms of parent rights to workforce participation.

Focus on primary, secondary and tertiary services

Investing in the Early Years explicitly identifies the need for strong universal systems of health and social support as necessary for families in supporting their children. In this, it places more emphasis than any of the other documents under review here on primary prevention and universal services. The strategy identifies 15 'immediate actions within existing resources' and a further 15 'steps to address gaps over the life of the strategy to 2020'. Of these 30, we classified 18 as primary, secondary, tertiary or some combination of the three (commitments to investigate policy, workforce development, research, data and evaluation strategies were among those not classified). We classified 13 as primary, three as both primary and secondary, and two as secondary. Primary interventions include the improvement of child health and development assessments; the strengthening of maternal, child and family health services; and strengthening 'policy and planning to strengthen broader socio-economic supports for families', including housing, parental leave, transport and income support. Secondary interventions include strengthening the capacity of homelessness, AOD and

mental health services to respond to the needs of children and their families.

UnitingCare Children, Young People and Families NSW.ACT has self-funded development of the NEWPIN program, that provides intensive family support. It is a good example of a tertiary service that facilitates linkages with and supported access to secondary and primary services.

The story below illustrates how NEWPIN provides a non-stigmatised entry point to more intensive support, and links children at risk of poor educational attainment with early assessment and support services:

Riley was three and half years old when his mother joined one of UnitingCare Burnside's programs, Newpin. When Riley talked to his mum he only used a few words. Other people had difficulty understanding him. Riley often felt frustrated because people did not seem to be listening to him. Sometimes, he would pull and grab and scream to get attention. The staff at Newpin were concerned for Riley's well-being. They suggested to his mother that Riley might enjoy preschool as a chance for him to meet other children. At preschool, Riley's teachers identified that he had a significant speech delay.

Riley had been through a lot by age three. As a baby, he had been left in his cot long after he had woken up. Sometimes he would cry but after a while he gave up. His mother suffered from post-natal depression but had not sought treatment because she did not know this illness existed. She believed her feelings of hopelessness and despair were normal and would pass with time. She was also trying to cope with her partner's heavy drinking and aggressive mood swings which sometimes escalated into physically violent confrontations. Depression and family violence left her with little energy to get Riley out of his cot. When she was bathing and feeding Riley, it was usually hard to summon the energy to smile at him.

This story shows that without access to intensive family support services, such as Newpin, and early childhood education, Riley's experience of social exclusion may have grown worse over time. An undiagnosed and untreated speech delay may have resulted in lower levels of literacy and lower educational outcomes over time. Without basic language skills, Riley might have had difficulties positively interacting with his peers. This may have compounded his early experiences of social isolation and exclusion which may have continued to manifest themselves as behaviour difficulties at home and at school. (UnitingCare Children Young People and Families, 2008)

At risk groups and priority areas

Indigenous children, children in the child protection system and out-of-home care, and children from families experiencing income poverty are identified as being at greater risk of experiencing developmental issues. With evidence from the Longitudinal Study of Australia's Children on children's developmental outcomes, other groups include parent's age, educational level and family income to be associated with children's developmental outcomes. Multiple risks (including parents' health and level of social participation) are also found to increase risk factors. Six reform priorities are outlined in the Strategy to address the gaps in early childhood development, one of which is 'support vulnerable children'. The groups of children identified in *Investing in the Early Years* are largely the same as those identified in *Protecting Children* (Indigenous, low-income families, parents with low education level, alcohol and drug abuse). Similarly, both frameworks/strategies propose that 'universal service platforms provide a non-stigmatised entry point to more intensive support for families with additional needs' (p12).

 Groups identified under this priority are:

▶ Children with a disability

▶ Children at risk of homelessness

▶ Some Indigenous children

▶ Some children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

▶ Children in jobless families

▶ Children in or at risk of entering the child protection system.

In line with identifying these groups, further action includes improving assessment to identify vulnerable children (p28).

Investing in the Early Years frames homelessness as a barrier to achieving social inclusion where children experiencing homelessness are identified as a vulnerable group in accessing learning opportunities and achieving the early childhood development outcomes. Children's early development is strongly linked to their family and home environment. It has been found that children from families with certain characteristics (including unemployed parents or carers and from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds) are sometimes more vulnerable and require increased support in the early years. The strategy acknowledges that a component of supporting children's development through families, carers and communities is a commitment to supporting women and children at risk of homelessness (p28).

Investment in capacity building and integration

The overarching outcome of *Investing in the Early Years* is capacity building and integration across sectors and governments to improve access and quality of services for all children. This is best reflected in outcome 6, to 'improve whole-of-government policy and planning to strengthen broader socio-economic supports for families' (Table 4). Other strategies include increased support for parents and families through partnerships with government organizations and employers. *Investing in the Early Years* also addresses the need for investment to strengthen the workforce and to establish interdisciplinary practice, and also increase coordination between maternal, child and family health services and education and care and family support. Also, investment in research and monitoring, including the establishment of mechanisms to share information across professions and services illustrates the need for increased monitoring and cross-sector coordination.

The strategy addresses workforce development and, it should be noted, includes families and communities in a holistic approach to achieving outcomes for children's development. It also includes national workforce initiatives to improve the quality and supply of the early childhood education and care workforce, stating that 'workforce development is seen as critical for delivering improved quality as well as more effective service responses across sectors' (p16).

Investing in the Early Years acknowledges the importance of community engagement in achieving the strategy's outcomes. Steps to address gaps include building parent and community understanding of the importance of early childhood development and; building partnerships with non-government organisations and employers to increase support for families and communities.

4.3 Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia

Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (*EYLF*) focuses on improving the early learning experiences and life outcomes for children by creating positive learning environments. It includes parents and families as key to the development process of children in the early years, and therefore the home environment is important to achieving the Framework's vision - that 'all children experience learning that is engaging and builds success for life' (p7).

The *EYLF* is structured around **three elements** that address different aspects of children's development. These are **principles, practice and learning outcomes**. Each element includes components that address the importance of nurturing relationships at home and in the community, the opportunity for all children to access a quality early development environments, the importance of strong family and community relationships, and the necessity to provide culturally appropriate services for all children, specifically Indigenous children. The importance of acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage within early childhood settings is emphasised, including the need to address recruitment of Indigenous workforce. The five identified **learning outcomes** for children from birth to five years are:

1. Children have a strong sense of identity

2. Children are connected with and contribute to their world

3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

4. Children are confident and involved learners

5. Children are effective communicators

Three (of the five) of the identified learning outcomes that are especially important for the application of the *Protecting Children* framework are that children have a strong sense of identity, children are effective communicators and children have a strong sense of wellbeing (p21).

Document Analysis

At risk groups and priority areas

The *EYLF* does not address at-risk groups, as it focuses on the capabilities of all children and the principles, practices and outcomes of a positive early learning environment.

Children's rights, agency and capabilities

Early years practitioners are expected to conduct their daily practice in accordance with the principles in the UNCRC (p.5). The *EYLF* explicitly emphasises children's rights to the provision of services and their rights to be active participants in all matters affecting their lives. Social inclusion is a recurring theme in the document and operationalised in all domains of pedagogy. In addition the document supports the *Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008) goal that young Australians become active and informed citizens. The framework positions children as 'active constructers of knowledge' with 'agency and capacity to initiate and lead learning' (p.9).

Focus on primary, secondary and tertiary services

In terms of policy reform, the *EYLF* has a more specific focus, with more practice-relevant detail, than the others under review here. The three areas of principles, practice and learning outcomes do not translate readily into the terms of a public health model. Nonetheless, in its focus on partnerships (between educators and families, and between educators and practitioners from support services) and its identification of the need to 'recognise and respond to barriers to children achieving educational success', the framework does *imply* the importance of secondary services working with universal early years learning services.

Investment in capacity building and integration

The *EYLF* approaches the importance of the workforce and professionals in a holistic way, indicating that parents, carers, teachers and other professionals working with children must have an understanding of child in a family, cultural, and community context.

4.4 The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women: Immediate Government Actions

Reducing Violence is critically important to the implementation of *Protecting Children*, as violence against women in households, or in children's environments, has been found to increase the risk of child abuse, neglect and assault. The ability of the Government to achieve the stated goals and outcomes of *Reducing Violence* is therefore critical in the achievement of the *Protecting Children's* outcomes.

Reducing Violence emphasises prevention of violence and is supported by priority action areas, including the development of a national primary prevention framework. Other priority action areas include co-ordination with other Government policy plans, including homelessness, child protection, and family law.

The plan outlines that a number of groups across Commonwealth and State jurisdictions that must work together in order to address the issues of violence against women. These are: police; courts; legal system; health and community services; and education systems.

Outcomes and actions of the Plan:

Communities are safe and free from violence – A number of initiatives have been established by the Government to improve the safety of communities, especially for women and children. Planned action included the development of a National Primary Prevention Framework, the establishment of a Centre of Excellence for the Prevention of Violence against Women, reform of the National Research Priorities to include freedom from violence against women, and the reduction of overcrowding in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Relationships are respectful – As *Reducing Violence* indicates, violence against women would be significantly reduced if all women experiences safe and respectful relationships. The Government will work with the States and Territories through COAG to increase the take-up of respectful relationships programs as the evidence, and research will be completed to assess the effectiveness of these programs.

Services meet the needs of women and their children – This outcome includes personal safety and adequate housing, in connection with the National Partnership Agreement on Housing. This outcome will be supported by *Protecting Children.*

Responses are just – This outcome includes strengthening the reporting and legal system for domestic violence related deaths. This outcome is being supported by reforms and reviews of family law and is especially relevant for the 'point' of the pyramid represented in Protecting Children, where the most severe steps are taken to address violence and abuse afflicted on women and children, and provide adequate services and care during transition periods. One action of this initiative is the training of professionals (lawyers, judicial officers and counsellors) to improve the consistency in the handling of family violence cases.

Perpetrators stop their violence – The major component to achieve this outcome is an investment in research to better understand the effectiveness of perpetrator treatment programs. Collaboration with States and Territories is identified as essential for connecting with treatment programs in prisons.

Systems work together effectively – All levels of government and non-government bodies must work together to effectively report measures and monitor performance. The role of the not-for-profit sector is also identified as a key player in supporting complex social issues such as violence against women and their children.

In addition to actions and strategies aligned with the six outcomes, 20 high-priority actions are identified, which require urgent response.

Document analysis

Children's rights, agency and capabilities

Arguably, *Reducing Violence* has a more explicit focus on agency than all the other documents under review with the exception of the *EYLF*. For example, it focuses on the actions and choices of both perpetrators and men who oppose violence: this attention to adult

agency is more or less absent from *Protecting Children*. Children's agency is given relatively less attention. *Reducing Violence*, like the National Council's document to which it is a response, constructs children and their mothers as victims in need of support. However, in its emphasis on respectful relationships and the importance of education, *Reducing Violence* recognises children's capacity to disrupt the misogynist cultural norms behind violence to women.

Focus on primary, secondary and tertiary services

The document identifies 20 immediate government actions, 15 of which we classified as primary, secondary or tertiary. There is a fairly even distribution of the three intervention types: six primary, five secondary and four tertiary. Primary interventions reflect the emphasis of the plan on respectful relationships and cultural shifts in attitudes towards gendered violence, such as educational programs that encourage respectful relationships. Secondary interventions include the implementation of *The Road Home* on homelessness reform strategies and the establishment of telephone and online crisis support services. Tertiary programs include changes to homicide review processes and the implementation and evaluation of domestic violence programs in prisons.

At risk groups and priority areas

Reducing Violence identifies groups that are at higher risk of experiencing violence and abuse and includes strategies specific to these groups. To address vulnerabilities of Indigenous women, programs are being established in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to respond to family violence. One initiative is the Indigenous Healing Foundation, which will have a strong emphasis on helping families and communities overcome grief and trauma (p10). For women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, the Complex Case Support Services is targeted toward recently arrived female migrants and refugees.

Investment in capacity building and integration

Reducing Violence includes investment in increased capacity through increased services and workforce capacity. A new national domestic violence and sexual assault telephone and online crisis service, supported by investment in professional workforce development, is one of the plan's major capacity building initiatives

to prevent and respond to women at risk of violence. The Government has also invested in the prevention of violence in the Northern Territory by establishing the Emergency Response Family Support Package to fund cooling-off centres for men, and safe houses for women and children, plus addition Night Patrol Services to support 73 remote communities.

Other capacity building investment includes prevention activities (respectful relationships programs and social marketing). *Reducing Violence* acknowledges the need for all levels of government to work together and a National Partnership is being developed with the not-for-profit sector to support greater collaboration on complex social issues, including violence against women and their children (p29).

In Uniting Care Wesley Adelaide, several programs work towards addressing the causes and impacts of violence in families, and building more positive relationships in families:

Couples who attend counselling commonly present with 'relationship' or 'communication' issues. Often what is not named, by either party, is a pattern of behaviour which limits the choices of one partner, invariably the female partner in heterosexual relationships, and children. It is during initial intake that issues of violence, control and abuse are often attended to by our counsellors. These programs aim to enable victims and perpetrators of violence to name the violence within the relationship and attribute one hundred percent responsibility to the perpetrator of this violence.

Working with Men Who Use Violence

Our individual and group programs seek to allow men the understanding and knowledge of relationship violence that directly prevents the present and future perpetration of violence. Our individual and group programs seek to uncover men's views about what kind of husband, partner and father they want to be and how violence gets in the way of this.

Our Principles regarding working with violence include:

Safety of women and children is the top priority

Male violence and women and children's experience sits within a social/political context of unequal power

relations that exist in terms of gender, race, class, and sexual preference.

Male violence is about men's sense of entitlement (in terms of men having and exercising power and control) over women and children, and this sense of entitlement is reflected in many facets of our society.

In a legal context violence is against the law, and that an individual's right to physical/emotional safety is paramount. Women and children are not responsible in any way for violence they experience.

Violence is a choice which men exercise and they can therefore bring about change in their lives, based on their particular values or ethics (honourable), that guide them in this.

Identity is not fixed but negotiated through social interaction.

Thus a man's use of violence is not totalising of his identity – there is more to him than his use of violence.

Relationship problems can only be addressed in a context of safety (absence of fear). Thus violence must be addressed first before relationship issues are considered

Every man that joins a group first fills out a consent form which allows us to talk with his female partner or ex-partner regarding his progress. Many women and children access individual or group counselling as a result of this.

Working with Women affected by violence

Many women come to our services feeling responsible for their partner's use of violence and control. Our individual and group programs seek to imbue in women a sense that violence is not their fault and that they and their children deserve to be safe in familial relationships.

Our service provides individual and group counselling for women and children who are affected by family violence. Additionally we facilitate the Women's Family Violence Peer Mentoring program where we train and support volunteer mentors, women who have been through our own individual and group programs regarding Family Violence and are now in safe and nurtured environments, to mentor women who are facing current relationship violence.

Working with Children affected by violence

Throughout the past twelve months our counselling service has facilitated a 'tree of life' program for primary school aged children to explore their own identities and ideas of safety. Our counsellors have been trained in using the Tree of Life program through our relationship with The Dulwich Centre. This program has been delivered through a partnership with Salisbury Primary School and Salisbury Uniting Church.

Reducing Violence includes development programs to build the capacity of the workforce delivering prevention education, including respectful relationships programs. A workforce development that addresses the need to provide consistency in the delivery of services is the Government's commitment to *develop a multi-disciplinary training package* for lawyers, judicial officers, counsellors and other professionals working in the family law system (p5).

Reducing Violence identifies the importance of creating partnerships to address priority areas, including homelessness. Initiatives to achieve this stated goal include programs to provide women with improved housing options 'including exit points from crisis support services' (p9). Also, the 'Safe at Home' programs will assist women to stay safely in their homes (during a transition) through joint action from police, health and community services; and these programs also fund short term rental and accommodation services.

Services across the UnitingCare network work daily at the interface between care and protection, housing support, violence prevention services and family law systems. The stories below outline the challenges faced by people whose lives are impacted by multiple systems that do not talk well to each-other:

Family law and care and protection systems:

Issues for families following separation and divorce can often be exacerbated when these families have some involvement with state statutory child protection bodies. A typical scenario in this situation is where there has been domestic violence and there are child protection concerns with regard to the perpetrator. It is not uncommon for the parent who has the children living with them (where they are not the perpetrator) to be told by the child protection agency

that if they allow the children to see the other parent they run the risk of having the children removed from their care.

However, these parents can be approached as part of a compulsory mediation process under the Family Law Act to discuss arrangements for the other parent to have contact with the children. If they refuse to attend, many of these parents are fearful of being taken to the Family Court by the other parent to get court ordered time with the children. If they do attend they must keep the directive of the child protection agency at the centre of any discussions they have and this is rarely, if at all, understood or accepted by the other parent as a legitimate barrier to their contact with the children.

Family law and family violence

Story 1:

Our counselling service has had numerous referrals from courts, lawyers and men and women who have been encouraged to seek counselling as an arena to address estrangement of men and their children. Often these calls are made to us from women who feel that they have been labelled as 'mischievous' due to the fact their children are unwilling to spend time with their father due to fear. These women have in common a fear that the court will perceive them as unreasonably manipulating their children to distance themselves from their father.

One woman was in contact with our service trying frantically to arrange an appointment with her ex partner and son who did not want contact with him. We spoke to this woman about our reluctance to coerce her son if he did not want contact with his father. She agreed but told us that her lawyer had advised her she needed to be seen to do all she could to facilitate contact.

The practice of woman attempting to take responsibility for men's use of violence, within the Family Court system, replicates what has happened to them in their relationships and fails to provide them with a sense of safety.

Story 2:

Our Family Relationship Support Programs have noticed there are structures in place within the family court system that promote shared parenting over

safety of children. In many instances women consulting us know that they are sending children to unsafe access with their fathers, and they will pay the consequences should their children refuse. The commonality of such incidences being relayed to us in counselling is incongruous with our counselling values of prioritising children's safety

One conversation we had was with a lawyer acting for a father who was 'cold calling' counselling services in an attempt to find a service that would facilitate counselling between father and son. This was despite years of child abuse perpetrated form the father. While acknowledging the son may have some reservations about meeting with his father the lawyer was adamant that we accept this task because in his words the court believes this child will miss out if he does not change his mind and create a relationship with his father. Again, this is a very clear cut example of men not being encouraged or supported to accept any responsibility for their use of violence.

Child Protection, Youth Support and Housing services

Sally is 13 years old she is homeless, hungry, not attending school and wants a safe place to live. She is an 'unsafe sleeper'; assessing her options everyday and staying where she believes she is safest. Sometimes she stays with her mother who is a chronic alcoholic and unable to provide adequate care. Sally's mother is neglectful and physically and verbally abusive toward Sally. Sally's older brother lives in the family home; he is physically and sexually abusive toward Sally. Sometimes Sally sneaks into her boyfriend's window and stays with him. Her boyfriend is 17 years old and is physically violent toward her. At other times Sally sleeps in unbuilt houses. Child Protective Services are aware of Sally's situation; with 53 notifications made from a variety of sources. Child Protective Services have been unable to pick up Sally's case; the outcome being 'no action due to workload'.

Sally has had contact with range of support services over the years, e.g. alternative education, family support and youth justice. Sally was recently charged with a minor offence and is placed under a supervision order. Sally does not have a mobile phone or safe contact number so she rings her new case manager Tam several times a day to see if she has found any accommodation. Sally says she will live in a 'girls home' and 'it doesn't matter where'. Tam contacts the central emergency accommodation service but they

say they cannot offer Sally support because she is under 15 years old. Tam gets in contact with the Child Protective Services division of her Government Department but is unable to gain access to any funding, food or support for Sally. Tam contacts a non-government agency to explore emergency accommodation. The service requires an assessment by the central emergency accommodation service in order to house Sally, but again, this agency will not conduct the assessment or provide any support to Sally because she is under 15 years old. The non-government agency agrees to take an over the phone assessment from Tam and can accommodate Sally for three nights of emergency accommodation. At this stage there are no options for Sally when the three nights are up other than to resume 'unsafe sleeping'. Tam plans to make a notification everyday in the hope a case manager from the Child Protective Services division of her Government Department will be allocated to Sally's case.

Project Magellan is an interagency collaborative model of case management in the Family Court of Australia for cases where serious allegations are raised about sexual or physical abuse of children in post-separation parenting matters. An evaluation of the program found that it is a successful process for responding to allegations of child abuse in parenting matters (Higgins, 2007). Despite calls for its roll-out, *Protecting Children* states that Project Magellan will have an increased presence in only one jurisdiction, NSW. A national approach to improving the outcomes of children whose situation is worsened by poor co-ordination between statutory child protection systems and the family law system requires further attention.

Reducing Violence also includes support for research on harmonisation of Federal and State and territory laws and collaboration with the States and Territories to establish a national scheme for the registration of domestic and family violence orders. The Government will work with the States and Territories to establish a National Centre of Excellence for the Prevention of Violence against Women.

4.5 Australian Government Compact with Young Australians: National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions

The Australian Government's commitment to the National Compact with Young Australians was announced in April 2009 and was confirmed under the Council of Australian Government's (COAG) *National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions* in July 2009. The Partnership Agreement (*Youth Attainment*) sets out the objectives, outcomes and outputs; the roles and responsibilities of each party; performance benchmarks and reporting arrangements and financial and governance arrangements (p3).

The agreement reflects the collaboration of the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments to address issues relating to education, training and employment for youth aged 15 to 24, with an emphasis on transitions from school to further education, training and employment.

The main objective of the Agreement is to have achieved a grade 12 attainment rate of 90 per cent by 2015 and provide and education or training entitlement to young people aged 15 to 24. It is expected the Compact will provide up to 135,000 young people with further qualifications and the Compact will strengthen the current conditions unemployed young people must meet for the Youth Allowance. It will also affect young people and their parents (if child under 20), where anyone under 20 without a year 12 or equivalent must be in education or training to receive youth allowance and in order for parents to receive Family Tax Benefit Part A, child under 20 must have year 12 or be working.

Three core principles guide the compact, which are directed by the three action area outcomes – participation, lifting qualifications and successful transitions. These three principles and requirements are:

National Participation Requirement:

1. Anyone under 17 must be earning or learning (full time education, training or paid work

Education Attainment Targets for Young People:

2. If under 20 and not working, you will be provided with a training place (priority year 12 or equivalent VET qualification)

Supporting Successful Transitions:

3. If you are under 25 and not working you are guaranteed a place to gain the skills to return to employment

One of the support programs under the Youth Career and Transitions Services is Youth Connections, a program to provide an 'improved safety net for youth at risk through the provision of tailored case management and support to help young people re-connect with education and training and build resilience, skills and attributes that promote positive choices and wellbeing' (p9). This component of the Partnership is most relevant for children exiting out-of-home care who may require extra support to the transition into independent living.

Document analysis

Children's rights, agency and capabilities

The compact seeks to ensure young Australians aged 15-25 participate in employment either now or in the future. Participation in this document is conceptualised along the lines of mutual obligation which is considerably different from the way the term is used in *Investing in the Early Years* and the *EYLF*. The Compact strengthens participation requirements for young people to engage in education, training or work as a condition of their (or their family's) receipt of

income support. Commonwealth and State and Territory governments have committed to providing programs which maximize engagement, attainment and successful transitions for young people, school business community brokers to extend learning beyond the classroom, youth connections programs for youth at risk and a national career development projects and resources. These measures are supported by a communication strategy and improved data and reporting mechanisms. The compact provides avenues of participation for young people 'at risk of

disengagement' but to some degree presumes young people below the age of 15 are not disengaged (and have not been disengaged from formal learning for a substantial periods of time). Unlike *Investing in the Early Years* and the *EYLF*, the compact does not position service provision in a continuum that needs to be both comprehensive and integrated across universal and targeted services.

The participation requirements in the Compact are structured in such a way that young people's refusal or inability to comply will lead to a withdrawal of government responsibility to provide a basic living wage which will further disadvantage and exclude disengaged young people and those at risk.

This shift in the onus of responsibility doesn't recognise structural barriers faced by all young people (for example, less entry level jobs in the labour market) and potentially ignores issues for young people who have experienced a lifetime of disadvantage, poverty and exclusion. Also, a focus on supporting young people at this stage of life transition is potentially too little support too late for vulnerable and disadvantaged young people who have experienced intergenerational poverty, neglect, abuse and trauma, mental health substance misuse and involvement with the criminal justice system.

If a public health approach was applied in this policy framework, then there would be more focus on addressing the needs of children who are at risk of poor outcomes in the transition from adolescence to adulthood. This would include programs for children younger than 15 years who present as at-risk.

Many very positive programs have been developed for at-risk 8-14 year old children and young people. Two of these are outlined below:

Koori Holiday Program

The Airds/Bradbury Koori Holiday Program (the Program) was a vacation care Program operated by UnitingCare Burnside (Burnside) South Campbelltown Family Centre in partnership with local public schools (Briar Rd Public School and John Warby Public School). The Program was funded by the Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy in the NSW Department of Community Services (DOCS).

The Program was developed as an early intervention program for children aged from 5 – 13 years living in Airds at high risk of abuse and neglect. It used recreation and cultural activities as a non-threatening approach to assist children to build on their social and interpersonal skills and establish positive friendship networks. It provided a positive group experience to enhance and develop life skills through building on children's existing strengths and life experiences.

The Program ran in school holidays between 2003 and 2005. An evaluation in 2005 reviewed the effectiveness of the program over 9 holiday periods, with 278 children from 123 families attending. The Program had a high return rate, with 78 per cent of children returning for one or more holiday Program and 63 per cent attending all Programs.

The evaluation found that there were significant benefits for individual children, families, and the community as a result of the program. For example, teachers and principals reported that children who attended the program has decreased challenging behaviours, decreased suspension rates and increased school attendance.

This program was not re-funded in 2006 due to funding constraints.

Children's Living Skills Program

This is a program based in metropolitan Sydney that is funded by the NSW Government to build the living skills for children and young people. It is a targeted service for children and young people who are at risk of disengagement from school and universal services that are offered in local schools.

Research has showed that young people who gained a positive response from teachers and fellow students in high school were those who engaged people with direct eye contact and who greeted people directly. Using this research the program has designed several activities that develop these basic interpersonal skills throughout primary school. These activities gain intensity in the lead up to high school. 'Check it Out' and 'Moving Up' are targeted directly at teaching positive engagement skills to children and young people who are about to start high school and who are at risk of disengaging from the school system during this transitional phase.

This program design directly addresses risk factors by building the children and young people's ability to

engage with those protective factors that are available to them, such as school social networks and positive adult role models. Importantly, it is offered as part of a wrap-around service that works to address other risk factors at the same time.

Focus on primary, secondary and tertiary services

This document has far fewer actions that can be classified into intervention types than the others: of the three outcomes, and four outputs and strategies, only two are easily classifiable. Because it intervenes into the universal educational system, we classified one as primary: the education or training entitlement designed to ensure a '90 per cent Year 12 or equivalent attainment rate by 2015'. We classified the suite of services and supports making up the 'Youth Careers and Transitions Services' as secondary. These include project payments to states and territories; brokerage funds for school business and community partnerships brokers; and case management services for youth at risk.

At risk groups and priority areas

Youth Attainment identifies priority groups for the Youth Compact commitments and programs. Indigenous youth are identified as a high risk group, and *Youth Attainment* includes a specific *Indigenous Reporting* component, which is aimed to monitor progress and help achieve the stated outcomes to close the gap between Indigenous attainment and participation (p26). *Youth Attainment's* strategies and commitments emphasises a priority on youth transitioning from school to further education, training and employment but does not address gaps for the most vulnerable youth, who may not be in school or may be transitioning from the child protection system or out-of-home care.

Even young people with access to parental support struggle as they transition to adulthood, as is illustrated in this story from Wesley Mission Melbourne:

Bob's parents separated about 5 years ago. He is now 16 and until recently was living with his mum. Bob and his mum were having a lot of problems, including intense conflict. Bob was skipping a lot of school and drinking all day at home with friends while his mum was at work. He still saw his dad, but didn't get along with his dad's new partner. Bob drank a lot when he

was staying at his dad's place, although his dad found this easier to control. The living situation had become impossible for his mum to deal with and she was looking for help.

Bob came to stay at a crisis youth refuge in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne for about eight weeks. During his stay Bob, his family and the staff decided it would be best if Bob lived with his dad for a while. Staff recognised that there were other issues that needed to be dealt with within the family to prevent another breakdown, so they facilitated links with other specialist agencies. Bob's mum was put in contact with a Parent Support Program, Bob was connected with a drug and alcohol program and UnitingCare staff linked in with Bob's school to address barriers to his attendance, which immediately started to improve. An agency was engaged to provide mediation between Bob and his mum, and also between Bob, his dad, and new partner. When Bob and his dad started having trouble a few months after his first contact with UnitingCare Bob came back for a night to access help with sorting things out.

Investment in capacity building and integration

Youth Attainment puts a strong emphasis on building capacity of training and employment opportunities for youth by through partnerships and collaboration with local businesses and not-for-profit organisations. Additional funding from the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments will help to fund the additional training and education spaces and employment opportunities. Integration of services will be achieved as responsibility will be jointly established to remove duplication. The two program elements are the School Business Community Partnership Brokers and Youth Connections. The COAG Agreement also includes a commitment to improved communication between all levels of Government, which is supported by a Communications Strategy as part of the Agreement. The roles and responsibilities of each party (Commonwealth and State and Territory), plus shared responsibilities, are clearly outlined to eliminate duplication and better monitor progress (p16).

Youth Attainment includes a role for community organisations and local businesses to work together to create education, training and employment opportunities for youth in their communities.

4.6 *The Road Home*: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness

The Road Home outlines the goals and strategies to address homelessness in Australia and is an important document for understanding how their homelessness strategies interact with other reforms and frameworks to improve children's wellbeing and resilience. The overarching goal of the *Protecting Children* is to ensure children's wellbeing and development, by providing a safe and nurturing environment free from harm and neglect. One of the obvious measures of attaining this goal is the ability to ensure children do not experience homelessness, but rather are provided with a safe, happy and healthy home.

Vision The Road Home's targets are to halve homelessness and offer supported housing to all rough sleepers who need it by 2020.

Two of the groups targeted in *The Road Home* are children and their families and young people transitioning from out-of-home care or the child protection system. One of the main reasons children under 12 are homeless is because they (and usually their families) are escaping violence (p5). *The Road Home* indicates that 55 per cent of women with children seek housing assistance because they are escaping violence, and many more will stay with friends or family members in temporary arrangements. However, safety is often an ongoing problem that does not end when women and children leave the family home. In an effective system, 'victims of violence are supported both to find a safe home and to make contact with police to bring the violence to an end' (p7).

A large number of people seeking housing assistance are young people leaving the child protection system, where nearly half (45.2%) of all people seeking the support of specialist homelessness services are young people under 18 years of age, 'where child protection systems have not been able to provide secure, stable accommodation' (p9). Also, the number of children on care and protection orders and in out-of-home care has increased by 33.5 per cent from 2002 to 2006, indicating an increasing population that is vulnerable to homelessness. Under the *National Partnership on Homelessness*, young people leaving child protection

and juvenile justice system are one of the three prioritised group in preventing homelessness (p27).

The *Road Home* identifies four **main pathways into homelessness**:

1. Housing stress, often driven by poverty and accumulating debt

2. Family breakdown, particularly driven by domestic violence

3. Poor life transitions, particularly transitions out of the child protection system, prison or statutory care

4. Untreated mental health and substance use disorders that lead to the loss of housing, education, employment, family and other relationships

The **three strategies** outlined in *The Road Home* to respond to homelessness:

1. **Turning off the tap**: services will intervene early to prevent homelessness. This strategy involves collaborative action from other areas of government, including the reforms under *Protecting Children*. An initiative under this strategy is 'assisting up to 9,000 additional young people between 12 and 18 years of age to remain connected with their families' and helping women and children who experience domestic violence to stay in their family home (p.x).

2. **Improving and expanding services**: services will be more connected and responsive to achieve sustainable housing, improve economic and social participation and end homelessness for their clients. A workforce development strategy for specialist homelessness services is an initiative included under this strategy.

3. **Breaking the cycle**: people who become homeless will move quickly through the crisis system to stable housing with the support they need so that homelessness does not recur.

In line with *Protecting Children's* public health model, *The Road Home* indicates that both the specialist homelessness system and the universal system have roles to play to help people participate socially and economically in their communities and to maintain long-term housing (p.ix).

Document Analysis

Children's rights, agency and capabilities

Guiding principle 4 of *The Road Home* addresses the importance of individuals' rights and capabilities, by stating that 'clients need to be placed at the centre of service deliver and design […] people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness need to be included in the decision-making process' (Principle 4). However, it should be noted that homeless people are referred to as 'clients', arguably suggesting that the 'service' must be either purchased or deserved.

Focus on primary, secondary and tertiary services

The Road Home identifies ten principles; 36 actions ('where we will start') under the three strategies; four immediate actions for research and four actions for implementation and governance. Of the 36 actions specific to the three strategies, we classified 28 as primary, secondary, tertiary or some combination of the three (commitments to investigate policy options and data improvement were not classified). The focus of *The Road Home* is on early intervention and prevention, and better improvements for at-risk and homeless people, and this is reflected in the distribution of intervention types, the majority of which are secondary. Four were classed as primary, and include using universal services such as Centrelink as a mechanism for identifying at-risk clients and the use of local and regional action plans that emphasise integration. One of the principles: 'social inclusion drives our efforts' can also be seen in terms of universal or primary prevention strategies: 'The focus must be on building the capacity of people and communities to maximise everyone's potential to participate economically and socially.

Fourteen strategies are classified as secondary, and include the provision of support and the funding of services to allow women and children who have experienced violence to stay in their home and children to return to school. Two strategies were classified as both secondary and tertiary, and four as tertiary, and these include the delivery of additional services to support people with mental health problems who have been homeless to maintain their

housing, and new funding models for specialist homeless services.

There is a need to ensure that at whatever point across the spectrum of services that people access support, they get a respectful and enabling response to their needs.

In Victoria, Wesley Mission Melbourne manages a crisis support and housing program that delivers an alternative model to that offered to most families – temporary accommodation in motel accommodation whilst more permanent housing is sought.

This example illustrates the value of attending properly to housing issues, and reducing trauma and exacerbation of any non-housing related problems faced by families:

Jane is a 35 year old mother with two children. For three of years she lived in an Office of Housing property in regional Victoria. There had been a lot of conflict between neighbours and she no longer felt safe there with her children. She was also having trouble with her young son, who was aggressive and violent towards her and his younger sister. Feeling unsafe in her home and feeling like she had no other option, she returned to Melbourne's western suburbs to live with her ex-partner, whom she had previously left because of domestic violence. During this short time the children left their school in regional Victoria, and changed school twice when living in western suburbs. After a short period of time the violence started again from her ex-partner. She left with the children and moved in with her sister in the eastern suburbs, an area she had never lived before and knew no-one but her sister. This accommodation broke down after one week. With no other supports, and nowhere left to go, she turned to 'Eastern Housing Action and Support' (EHAS).

EHAS placed her in our crisis accommodation facility in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. This is a unique facility made up of two units, which can each accommodate up to two families. Parents and children have their own bedroom and bathroom, and share

kitchen, living and outdoor areas with another family. EHAS pays approximately the same rates as for a motel room. Families can stay for up to 13 days at this facility, as opposed to a motel, where they might only get one night's accommodation, then spend the next day looking for somewhere else to stay. The difference between this accommodation and a motel is stability, giving residents the chance to re-establish a routine and prepare healthy meals for their family. It also gives people time to think about what they need to do next, instead of just looking for the next night's accommodation. Jane has significant drug and alcohol problems, and had previously tried to apply to a residential treatment program. Yet, to be accepted she had to attend weekly meetings and this was not possible when she was moving across the state with her children in search of somewhere safe and stable to live. During the short time she has been at EHAS's crisis accommodation, Jane has been accepted into the residential rehabilitation program, and she has negotiated with EHAS to remain in this accommodation until her place is available in a few weeks. The children have enrolled in a local school and are enjoying being there. This flexibility of response had made all the difference to Jane and her children.

All of this would have been so much harder, and these positive changes may not have happened at all, if Jane and her children been in motel accommodation, or even a different type of crisis accommodation. The stability, security and flexibility offered by EHAS's crisis facility made all the difference to the complex situation Jane and her children were facing. Stable accommodation gave Jane time to think and plan. This, combined with support from staff, and a flexible, coordinated response from EHAS and the rehabilitation service, helped Jane decide what is best for her family and what she had to do to get there.

At risk and priority areas

The Road Home identifies four main pathways into homelessness, and which guide the priority areas for the guiding principles of the document. These main pathways are housing stress, usually as a result of income poverty and debt, family breakdown (often domestic violence), poor life transitions (including leaving out-of-home care) and untreated mental health and/or untreated substance abuse issues. Additional funding to prevent and respond to these priorities, as stated in the paper's second strategy—'improving and

expanding services'. In addition to general support for service expansion to prevent and respond to homelessness, the strategies target women and children as a group who should be provided with access to safe housing following family breakdown or domestic violence. The Paper also identifies life transitions as a priority area, which is supported by guiding principle 8. The 'no exits into homelessness' commits the Government to helping youth leaving out-of-home care.

The story below from UnitingCare Burnside in New South Wales illustrates good practice in supporting young people as they transition out of out-of-home-care in early adulthood:

Amelia is nineteen years old and lives in Bega. One year ago she was preparing to leave care. Her foster care placement was strained towards the end of her time in care, so she wanted to live independently. However she was anxious that she would not know how to support herself.

Together with Community Services (NSW Department of Human Services), the UnitingCare Burnside ACE Southern program sat down with Amelia and drew up a Leaving Care Plan. Her leaving care goals were to live independently, to continue her studies and to retain her relationship with her foster carers.

Amelia found share-house accommodation in Bega and with the financial support that was offered under the Leaving Care Plan, she was able to pay bond and other establishment expenses. She was also able to purchase furniture and other household goods.

Amelia completed her Higher School Certificate (HSC) after she had moved out of her foster care placement. Alongside her high school subjects she completed a Vocational Education and Training (VET) course at TAFE. This gave her a qualification in hospitality upon graduation, which would assist in employment and further education in that field. Amelia quickly gained a part time job and this assisted greatly with her independent living goals.

At home, Amelia was assisted to participate in meetings with her flatmate to establish household rules and sort out shared bills. With ACE, she developed a 'Managing Money' folder which helped with financial planning. Strengths cards were used to

help Amelia to assess her ability to maintain her living arrangements.

Amelia was awarded 'HSC student of the year' in her VET course. With a long term goal of attending university, she has enrolled in a Retail and Tourism course at TAFE.

Her final goal has been quietly achieved as well. Amelia keeps in contact with her foster care family and shares her success stories with them.

Investment in capacity building and integration

Overall, the Government has committed to a 55 per cent increase in investment in homelessness services (p16). In addition to investment in mainstream services, the Government acknowledges the need to involve cross-sector strategies and action plans, including the Closing the Gap Packages for Indigenous Australians, the national Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy and the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children. The Paper notes three partnership strategies that work together to reduce homelessness, which include the Partnerships on Social Housing, on Remote Indigenous Housing and Homelessness and the National Affordable Housing Agreement.

Principles 1 and 7 of *The Road Home* support collaboration by governments and integration of services through strong leadership by Commonwealth and State government, businesses and not-for-profit organisations (p19) and joined up services using a multidisciplinary approach.

There is a need to focus attention on relatively mundane system reforms that have the potential to be transformative in the lives of people dealing with homelessness. Alignment of priorities and communication across different service systems that people access would go a long way to ensuring better outcomes for people and less waste of resources across the service system.

Another story from UnitingCare Burnside in New South Wales illustrates this point:

Georgia has been attending a centre-based family preservation service with her two year-old son, Adam. She has five more children ranging in age from six to seventeen years. Until recently she was living in the local area. Georgia had some troubles with the owner of the house that she was renting. She was having

difficulty negotiating with him to have some maintenance work done on the house. She had agreed to fix some of the maintenance problems herself, as they were the result of damage inflicted by her teenage sons. However she required the owner to maintain the safety and working order of windows, doors and fences so that Adam would be safe in the house.

When there were no results, Georgia withheld part of her rent each fortnight but still paid her rent regularly and on time. She soon received a notice that if the owner did not receive the full amount of rent her lease would be terminated. By this time Georgia's lease was on a week-by-week basis. This meant that she and her family were in a vulnerable position as the owner was only required to give them two weeks' notice if he wished to terminate the lease.

Georgia was aware of her vulnerable position and started to look for other houses. She contacted Housing NSW, with whom she had been enrolled for two years, to stress the urgency of her need for a new house for her family. She also started to apply for houses on the private rental market. Georgia was rejected for every single one.

Housing NSW required her to inform them on a weekly basis of the number of houses that she had inspected and applied for in the rental market. Georgia doesn't have a car and is a single mother, so Adam had to come with her to every single inspection. She had some support from her brother but couldn't always count on it. She started looking for alternative places for her teen-aged children to stay as smaller houses were cheaper and more readily available in the private rental market.

Our service assisted Georgia with character references and we accompanied her with visits to Housing NSW. Georgia was also supported to contact the NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS) Helpline to request support for herself and her three youngest children. Support was unavailable.

Georgia's lease was terminated. She approached Housing NSW and was given a one-bedroom motel room that was more than an hour away from her local community on public transport. She and Adam moved into the motel room with Georgia's two other youngest children. She had found alternative accommodation for her teenagers.

Georgia was in contact with our service on that day. She reported feeling isolated and upset for her children – they were bored and cramped in the hotel room, isolated from their friends and deprived of their schooling. The motel was in a colder area and the family were unprepared for this, with no warm clothes. All the local support services in her new location had closed for the weekend. Housing NSW could not tell Georgia how long it would take to find more appropriate accommodation.

Georgia has been homeless now for eight weeks. She was initially told by Housing NSW that she had been moved to the top of the priority list and would have a house within two weeks. However a second phone call revealed that the waiting period had extended to anything between six and eighteen months.

Georgia does not have a safe and stable home for herself and her family. Her children are deprived of their right to attend school. Georgia has not been adequately consulted or informed at every step of the process. Under the current system no-one is directly responsible for the mess that Georgia is now dealing with and the current service system provides no mechanisms through which she can seek redress.

The Road Home acknowledges the need to establish a workforce development strategy so there are 'enough people with the right skills to work actively with clients to end their homelessness'. A strong emphasis is also placed on building a national integrated service system, in combination with local and regional action plans (p38).

A high priority of *The Road Home* is improved research and monitoring across States and Commonwealth governments in order to accurately measure progress and establish future goals and strategies.

5. Conclusion

In our work in every state and territory, in metropolitan, rural and remote communities across Australia, UnitingCare sees both the multi-dimensional causes and intersecting impacts of social exclusion on children, young people and families. We also see the possibilities and transformation that timely, relevant and integrated services that build on individual and community strengths can enable.

The analysis in this paper provides a first step in understanding whether and how the current reform agenda will be able to deliver better outcomes for children, young people and families. It also points to some ways we could enhance and better integrate investments and efforts across communities, the service system and jurisdictions.

Greater integration of the objectives and desired outcomes of this reform agenda across government portfolios, levels of government and local level will value-add to the Government's policy objectives and result in more inclusive and cohesive communities in which all children, young people and families can flourish, grow and contribute. Greater integration will be supported by both enabling innovation and delivering administrative reform.

We are confident that a greater focus on children and young people provides opportunities for concrete and measurable improvements in the lives of this and future generations and to better achieve the aspirations outlined by the Australian Government.

UnitingCare Australia looks forward to working with governments, service providers, advocacy groups, researchers, children, young people and families to deliver on the promise of the national reform agenda.

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Appendix A: Framework for analysis of social inclusion and policy agendas

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S SOCIAL INCLUSION PRINCIPLES	POLICY AGENDAS					
	Protecting Children (Outcomes)	*Investing in the Early Years* (Outcomes and Actions)	EYLF (Outcomes)	*Reducing Violence* (Key Outcomes)	*Youth Attainment* (Outcomes)	*The Road Home* (Principles)
Aspirational Principles						
1. Reducing Disadvantage	5. Indigenous children are supported and safe in their families and communities	O1. Children are born and remain healthy			2. Young people make a successful transition from school to further education, training or full-time employment	3. Social inclusion drives our efforts
		O2. Children's environments are nurturing, culturally appropriate and safe			3. Increased attainment of young people aged 15-24, including Indigenous youth	
2. Increasing social, civil and economic participation	1. Children live in safe and supportive families and communities	O3. Children have the knowledge and skills for life and learning	1. Children have a strong sense of identity		1. Increased participation of young people in education and training	6. The rights and responsibilities of individuals and families need to be protected

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AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S SOCIAL INCLUSION PRINCIPLES	POLICY AGENDAS					
	Protecting Children (Outcomes)	*Investing in the Early Years* (Outcomes and Actions)	EYLF (Outcomes)	*Reducing Violence* (Key Outcomes)	*Youth Attainment* (Outcomes)	*The Road Home* (Principles)
			2. Children are connected with and contribute to their world			
		O5. Children are engaged in and benefiting from educational opportunities.	3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing			
		O6. Families are confident and have the capabilities to support their children's development	4. Children are confident and involved learners			
		O7. Quality early childhood development services that support the workforce participation choices of families.	5. Children are effective communicators.			

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S SOCIAL INCLUSION PRINCIPLES	POLICY AGENDAS					
	Protecting Children (Outcomes)	*Investing in the Early Years* (Outcomes and Actions)	EYLF (Outcomes)	*Reducing Violence* (Key Outcomes)	*Youth Attainment* (Outcomes)	*The Road Home* (Principles)
3. A greater voice, combined with greater responsibility			2. Children are connected with and contribute to their world		1. Increased participation of young people in education and training	4. Clients need to be placed at the centre of service delivery and design
			5. Children are effective communicators.			6. The rights and responsibilities of individuals and families need to be protected
Principles of Approach						
4. Building on individual and community strengths	1. Children live in safe and supportive families and communities	A1. Support for children, parents, carers and communities				3. Social inclusion drives our efforts
	5. Indigenous children are supported and safe in their families and communities					6. The rights and responsibilities of individuals and families need to be protected

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S SOCIAL INCLUSION PRINCIPLES	POLICY AGENDAS					
	Protecting Children (Outcomes)	*Investing in the Early Years* (Outcomes and Actions)	EYLF (Outcomes)	*Reducing Violence* (Key Outcomes)	*Youth Attainment* (Outcomes)	*The Road Home* (Principles)
5. Building partnerships with key stakeholders	2. Risk factors for child abuse and neglect are addressed	A2. Responsive early childhood development services			1. Increased participation of young people in education and training	1. A national commitment, strong leadership and cooperation from all levels
		A3. Workforce and leadership development				
6. Developing tailored services	2. Risk factors for child abuse and neglect are addressed	A2. Responsive early childhood development services		3. Services meet the needs of women and their children	1. Increased participation of young people in education and training	5. The safety and wellbeing of all clients is essential
	3. Children who have been abused or neglected receive the support and care they need for their safety and wellbeing			6. Systems work together effectively	2. Young people make a successful transition from school to further education, training or full-time employment	
	4. Children who have been abused or neglected receive the support and care they					

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S SOCIAL INCLUSION PRINCIPLES	POLICY AGENDAS					
	Protecting Children (Outcomes)	*Investing in the Early Years* (Outcomes and Actions)	EYLF (Outcomes)	*Reducing Violence* (Key Outcomes)	*Youth Attainment* (Outcomes)	*The Road Home* (Principles)
	need for their safety and wellbeing					
	6. Child sexual abuse and exploitation is prevented and survivors receive adequate support.					
7. Giving high priority to early intervention and prevention	2. Risk factors for child abuse and neglect are addressed	1. Support for children, parents, carers and communities		1. Communities are safe and free from violence		2. Preventing homelessness is important
		A2. Responsive early childhood development services		2. Relationships are respectful		8. Transition points are a priority
8. Building joined-up services and who of government solutions	2. Risk factors for child abuse and neglect are addressed	All areas of action plan are geared towards joined up solutions		2. Relationships are respectful	* School, Business and Community Partnerships	1. A national commitment, strong leadership and cooperation from all levels

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S SOCIAL INCLUSION PRINCIPLES	POLICY AGENDAS					
	Protecting Children (Outcomes)	*Investing in the Early Years* (Outcomes and Actions)	EYLF (Outcomes)	*Reducing Violence* (Key Outcomes)	*Youth Attainment* (Outcomes)	*The Road Home* (Principles)
				3. Services meet the needs of women and their children		7. Joined-up service delivery needs joined-up policy
				5. Perpetrators stop their violence		
9. Using evidence and integrated data to inform policy	4. Children who have been abused or neglected receive the support and care they need for their safety and wellbeing	A7. Knowledge management and innovation.		4. Responses are just		9. Evidence-based policy helps to shape our priorities for action
	* Data and monitoring also in within the evaluation plan of the framework			5. Perpetrators stop their violence		10. Targets are set to reduce homelessness and hold ourselves accountable
				6. Systems work together effectively		

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S SOCIAL INCLUSION PRINCIPLES	POLICY AGENDAS					
	Protecting Children (Outcomes)	*Investing in the Early Years* (Outcomes and Actions)	EYLF (Outcomes)	*Reducing Violence* (Key Outcomes)	*Youth Attainment* (Outcomes)	*The Road Home* (Principles)
10. Using locational approaches	5. Indigenous children are supported and safe in their families and communities	* Community led infrastructure developments in areas of concentrated disadvantage p. 29				
11. Planning for sustainability	4.Children who have been abused or neglected receive the support and care they need for their safety and wellbeing	A3. Workforce and leadership development				10. Targets are set to reduce homelessness and hold ourselves accountable
		A4. Quality and regulation				
		A5. Infrastructure				
		A6. Governance and funding				
		A7. Knowledge management and innovation.				

Appendix B: Links

Key Documents

Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020

Investing in the Early Years – A National Early Childhood Development Strategy

Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia

The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women: Immediate Government Actions

National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions

The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness

Other relevant documents and links

Social Inclusion Principles for Australia

Productivity Commission Draft Report on the Not-for-Profit Sector

FaHCSIA Family Support Program

National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness