

FECCA responds to announcement of the Third Action Plan (2015-18) under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children

The Third Action Plan (2015-18) under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children has been released today. FECCA contributed to the development of the Third Action Plan by attending consultations and making a written submission. FECCA's submission highlighted that culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children and their families should be accorded a particular focus in the Plan due to the unique set of challenges and barriers that CALD families and children face.

The Plan places strong emphasis on prevention and early intervention, and targets assistance to those communities that have most contact with the child protection system. FECCA is pleased to see that the Third Action Plan identified children and youth from CALD backgrounds and from new and emerging communities as a focus area. We also welcome that the Plan has adopted a holistic approach that recognises the interrelated nature of many issues affecting families, considering the abuse and neglect on families impacted by disability, and those dealing with mental health issues, alcohol and other drug misuse, and domestic and family violence.

The National Framework will implement three strategies to protect Australia's children. These are:

1. **Early intervention with a focus on the early years, particularly the first 1000 days for a child.** This strategy will include building greater community awareness around child well being. It stresses the importance of quality and effective parenting, encouraging communities to share responsibility for care of children and young people, as well as seeking help earlier if required. Particular emphasis will be placed on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, and families dealing with multiple issues including mental health issues, alcohol and other drug misuse, or domestic and family violence.
2. **Helping young people in out-of-home care to thrive into adulthood.** Actions will be directed to break the cycle of disadvantage for these young people and their future children. This strategy seeks to provide intensive support and priority access to key services, including housing, to assist these young people transition well into adulthood.
3. **Organisations responding better to children and young people to keep them safe.** This strategy considers the findings of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and recognises cultural awareness as a crucial component. All child safe organisational approaches will be required to respect diversity in activities, cultures and child rearing practices to ensure cultural competency.

Strategy working groups responsible for each of the three strategies under the Plan will be established to provide oversight and drive implementation. FECCA welcomes the proposed strategy working groups under the Third Action Plan, as well as these working groups to engage with CALD communities to discuss key issues, their application, and impact of strategies and actions.

FECCA is disappointed that the Plan does not include a commitment to collect data on ethnicity, cultural background and country of origin in order to strengthen the knowledge base on specific issues of CALD communities. Comprehensive data is required to assist in the development of appropriate response strategies.

We are also disappointed that the Child Aware Local Initiative, which supports communities to undertake early intervention and prevention activities which contribute to keeping children safe and well, has not been mentioned in the Plan. This Initiative was a central priority in the Second Action Plan and FECCA believes that an extension of the program would present an opportunity to target new migrant communities.

FECCA looks forward to the implementation of the Third Action Plan by Commonwealth, State and Territory governments to improve the outcomes and safety of Australia's children.

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