

## **Implementing the successor plan to the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020**

Response from Integrated Family and Youth Service (IFYS)

Established more than 40 years ago IFYS is a leading provider of specialist support and intervention programs for children, young people and families. Working closely with businesses, corporations, governments and other charities we deliver accommodation, child protection, disability, family support and youth transition services throughout the State of Queensland.

### **Vision, Goal, Target Cohort and Priority Groups**

The proposed focus and scope of the Successor Plan to the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 including the vision, goal, target cohort and priority groups are supported by IFYS and align with the organisation's own vision to see a future where all children and young people are provided with the necessary education, protection and support to remain safe from abuse and risk of harm.

IFYS supports the proposed values intended to underpin the Framework, and to a degree believes they are reflective of the principles that should guide it. However, in line with recommendations 12.14 and 12.15 of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, IFYS would like to see a greater emphasis placed on addressing the problem of child sexual exploitation (CSE) including the introduction of a nationally consistent definition and policy framework that supports practice to disrupt this form of abuse. IFYS would also like to see a clear focus on the reduction of stigma, the facilitation of help seeking for victims and survivors, and reference to education and awareness within the construct of the overall goals. Furthermore, IFYS believes that any statement of 'Vision', 'Goals' and 'Guiding Principles' should be clear in how it measures itself against the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**.

### **Strategic Priority Themes**

All of the proposed strategic priority themes are, in principle, supported by IFYS. However, the strategic priority themes do not appear to provide a strong enough focus on 'primary prevention'. We would suggest that this might be included within the context of the second strategic priority.

IFYS requests that priority be given to the following key areas within the list of actions that sit under the proposed strategic priority themes:

- Clear, consistent evidence-based definitions and terminology for child sexual abuse, especially in relation to the sexual exploitation of children - to support appropriate trauma informed responses, accurate categorisation and data collection. IFYS believes that such definitions and terminology should be comprehensive enough to acknowledge the complex contexts within which this form of abuse takes place and recognise the intersections that might occur between this form of abuse and other types of situations such as harmful sexual behaviours and domestic violence. For this reason IFYS would recommend utilising the UK Government definition of CSE:

*“Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology” (Beckett et al, 2017, P.7).*

- Development of a nationally consistent policy framework that supports and encourages multi-agency collaboration and information sharing to ensure the best outcomes for victims of child sexual abuse.
- Development of framework that recognises and responds comprehensively to the connection between young people going missing and child sexual and criminal exploitation in the community.
- Capacity building for frontline human services workers on complex child protection issues such as child sexual exploitation through professional development and whole organisation approach strategies.
- Development of education addressing the sexual exploitation of children and young people not only as a tertiary response but inclusive of actual prevention strategies.
- Advocacy, education and reform influencing the drivers of abuse and violence against children.
- A clearly articulated and agreed to framework for reducing the over representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection system that does not compound or contribute to the intergenerational trauma that has already been suffered in those communities.
- Identification of how joint service planning and investment will be implemented and ideas for supporting sectors to provide wrap around service provision in a climate of competition for funding and managing complex human service dilemmas such as CSE.
- Development of a national campaign to assist in the promotion and awareness of contemporary child safety initiatives, especially those related to CSE.

## **Role of the non-government sector**

To ensure meaningful and cohesive engagement with key stakeholders, IFYS recommends the inclusion of representatives from each of the stakeholder groups mentioned in the Consultation Paper (especially children, parents and carers) on committees, review boards and other policy making groups, so that their knowledge and experience can inform future frameworks and policy development for understanding, educating and responding to potential and perceived risks associated with child protection and the prevention of abuse.

IFYS has membership with a number of national and state stakeholder working groups that could serve both as a useful mechanism for consultation and for co-design. IFYS would welcome the opportunity to be involved in the design and implementation of individual actions under the Successor Plan to the National Framework once it is launched. All strategic priority themes fall within the sphere of relevance to IFYS's work and activities.

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