April 2011 marked the second anniversary of the announcement of the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009–2020 ("the National Framework") by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG, 2009a). The aim of the National Framework is to make a substantial and sustained reduction in child abuse and neglect; such a goal is to be achieved through a series of three-year action plans to 2020.

This article discusses the origins and key aspects of the National Framework, offers perspectives on achievements to date, and suggests elements for inclusion in the forthcoming second three-year action plan, covering the period from 2012 to 2015.

Origins

A comprehensive history of the movement to develop a national approach to address child abuse and neglect in Australia remains to be written. Such a history would, almost certainly, be a story of the contributions of innumerable individuals and organisations over many years, all seeking to promote the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Such a history would point to specific campaigns and contributions along the way; for example, that by the Child and Family Welfare Association of Australia (CAFWAA), whose 2002 report, *A Time to Invest in Australia’s Most Disadvantaged Children, Young People and Their Families*, urged state, territory and Commonwealth governments to work in concert on matters such as the development of minimum standards on child protection notification, investigation and substantiation rates (CAFWAA, 2002).

Building on this work, the then recently established Families Australia launched its campaign, Our Children: Our Concern, Our Responsibility, in 2003 to encourage the Commonwealth Government to play a leadership role in the prevention of child abuse and neglect (Families Australia, 2003). In 2004, Families Australia convened a national summit.
to highlight the need to establish a national strategy to combat child abuse and neglect.

In a more general sense, however, these and other campaigns manifested growing community and political concern, and frustration, about Australia’s alarmingly high rates of child abuse and neglect. At the national level, four major inquiries were conducted between 1997 and 2005 that focused public and political attention on various aspects of the problem. In 1997, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission issued its report, *Bringing Them Home: National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children From Their Families*, which was instrumental in later Commonwealth government policies in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities. In the four years after 2001, the Senate Community Affairs References Committee issued three landmark reports: *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record* (2001), which inquired into child migration; *Forgotten Australians: A Report on Australians Who Experienced Institutional or Out-of-Home Care as Children* (2004); and *Protecting Vulnerable Children: A National Challenge* (2005), the second report on the inquiry into children in institutional or out-of-home care.

At the state and territory level, child protection law and practices were also receiving significant attention, as seen by the number of official inquiries that were conducted in the period between 1997 and 2004. These included:

- The Royal Commission Into the New South Wales Police Service (Wood Royal Commission, 1997);
- The Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions (Forde Inquiry, 1999);
- The Inquiry into Provision and Practice of Substitute Care in NSW (Community Services Commission, 2000);
- The Western Australian *Putting the Picture Together: Inquiry Into Response by Government Agencies to Complaints of Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities* (Gordon Report, 2002);
- The Review of Child Protection in South Australia’s *Our Best Investment: A State Plan to Protect and Advance the Interests of Children* (Layton, 2003);
- The Ombudsman Tasmania’s (2004) *Listen to the Children: Review of Claims of Abuse from Adults in State Care as Children* (O’Grady Review); and

An important milestone along the path to establishing a national approach for protecting children was the decision by the Commonwealth Government—in response to the 2005 Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee report, *Protecting Vulnerable Children*—to convene a National Child Protection Forum. The resulting gathering of government and non-government organisation (NGO) representatives and academics in June 2006 resolved to develop a National Child Protection Strategy to present to politicians. A forum working group subsequently developed a document, *Towards a National Child Protection Strategy for Australia* (Families Australia, 2007), which called for a national approach to child protection in order to:

- avoid duplication in investment and effort; facilitate the sharing of resources and innovation; improve comparability across jurisdictions; ensure that learnings are applied across all jurisdictions; reduce inequity in the way children and families are supported/assisted…;
- facilitate a more evidence-based approach to implementing policies, services and programs; facilitate cross-sectoral collaboration…;
- take a short, medium and long-term approach to implementation; and form a possible basis for future Commonwealth-State agreements. (p. 4)

The Strategy recommended that national action focus on six main areas:

- primary services, which are universal services available and theoretically accessible to all children and families, complementing targeted child protection strategies;
- secondary services, which are targeted to children, families and communities where there are known risk factors;
- tertiary services, which focus on responding to children who have been harmed or are at risk of harm;
- addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system;
- national standards; and
- research, evaluation, dissemination and service data (Families Australia, 2007).

Although the Commonwealth Government of that time provided no substantive response, the Strategy provided a point of focus for NGOs in their efforts to encourage federal political
parties to adopt a national policy on child protection over the course of 2006 and 2007.

A significant development that occurred in the weeks prior to the 2007 Federal Election was a meeting in Canberra, facilitated by Families Australia, of 24 leading NGOs and academics. That gathering decided to establish a new entity, the Coalition of Organisations Committed to the Safety and Wellbeing of Australia’s Children (the “NGO Coalition”), with the aim of continuing to work towards a national approach for protecting children and promoting children’s wellbeing.  

Upon winning the 2007 Federal Election, the Labor Government set about developing the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children under the direction of the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, The Hon. Jenny Macklin MP. Working relations between the incoming Commonwealth Government and the NGO Coalition were quickly established, and a discussion paper was issued in May 2008 by the Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA, 2008). Public consultations based on the discussion paper were conducted around Australia over the following months. 

It is important to note that the NGO Coalition played a significant role from the outset in developing the National Framework and, in many respects, is potentially a model for collaborative public policy development between the NGO sector and government in other fields. One of the most important aspects of this phase was the high degree of unity of purpose developed within the NGO and academic sectors about the desired aims and objectives of the National Framework. Based in part on the 2006 document Towards a National Child Protection Strategy for Australia (Families Australia, 2007), the NGO Coalition quickly developed a clear set of proposed core principles and goals for the National Framework (NGO Coalition, 2007). In particular, it stated that the Framework should:

- have a focus on prevention and early intervention;
- set national targets and indicators of child wellbeing to drive improvement;
- ensure the engagement of NGOs and communities in the development of sustainable solutions;
- include workforce development strategies that would span public and private service provision;
- be based on evidence-informed policies supported by a national research agenda;
- contain evidence-based social marketing and health promotion strategies aimed specifically at preventing child abuse and neglect and enhancing children’s wellbeing;
- establish inter-governmental approaches to ensure collaboration and the maximisation of collective investments and intelligence; and
- establish a Commissioner and an Office for Australian children and young people.

From 2008, with a rapid expansion in membership and the range of subject areas it covered (such as medical, legal and disability issues), the NGO Coalition successfully presented itself to Commonwealth, state and territory governments as the major voice of the NGO sector and academia on Framework matters. It was also highly successful in arguing that the NGO Coalition should be regarded as an equal partner with Commonwealth, state and territory governments in planning and implementing the National Framework, on the grounds that the NGO sector had important expertise and experience as the deliverer of services to families and children on the ground, possessed research expertise and was making major financial and non-financial contributions to tackling child abuse and neglect and supporting families from its own resources, over and above funding provided by governments.

**National Framework: Key aspects**

In April 2009, COAG endorsed the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009–2020 (COAG, 2009a). In September 2009, the Community and Disability Services Ministers’ Conference (CDSMC), a standing Ministerial Conference established under COAG, announced the National Framework Implementation Plan for the first three years of the National Framework, 2009–2012 (COAG, 2009b). Both documents were derived in large part from an intensive discussion and
At the broadest level, the stated outcome of the National Framework is: “Australia’s children and young people are safe and well”.

At the political/strategic level, the National Framework is significant in three respects: it was the first time that a Commonwealth Government had explicitly stated its intention to play a major leadership role on national child protection matters; secondly, state and territory governments agreed to work in concert with the Commonwealth and the NGO sector to develop a better planned and coordinated system; and, thirdly, the NGO sector was acknowledged as a major partner by governments in the development of policy and the oversight of National Framework implementation (COAG, 2009b).

In the words of the document: “The National Framework represents an unprecedented level of collaboration between Australian, State and Territory governments and non-government organisations to protect children. Placing children’s interests firmly at the centre of everything we do [sic]” (COAG, 2009a, p. 5). Importantly, the Commonwealth Government also pledged an initial $61.6 million to support National Framework activities in the first three-year action plan.³

Conceptually, the National Framework claimed to be based on a public health model, under which:

priority is placed on having universal supports available for all families (for example, health and education). More intensive (secondary) prevention interventions are provided to those families that need additional assistance with a focus on early intervention. Tertiary child protection services are a last resort, and the least desirable option for families and governments. Just as a health system is more than hospitals so a system for the protection of children is more than a statutory child protection service. (COAG, 2009a, p. 7, emphasis in original)

At the broadest level, the stated outcome of the National Framework is: “Australia’s children and young people are safe and well” (COAG, 2009a, p. 11). It set the following target: “A substantial and sustained reduction in child abuse and neglect in Australia over time” (COAG, 2009a, p. 11). In setting this target, the document acknowledged the problems of measuring a reduction in child abuse and neglect due to the lack of robust data. The National Framework also noted Australia’s responsibilities toward children and young people as a signatory to the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In terms of content, the National Framework contained six Supporting Outcomes (COAG, 2009a), namely:

1. Children live in safe and supportive families and communities.
2. Children and families access adequate support to promote safety and intervene early.
3. Risk factors for child abuse and neglect are addressed.
4. Children who have been abused or neglected receive the support and care they need for their safety and wellbeing.
5. Indigenous children are supported and safe in their families and communities.
6. Child sexual abuse and exploitation is prevented and survivors receive adequate support.

The first three-year action plan contains 75 actions, which are divided into four groupings: national priorities, major reforms, ongoing initiatives for children and young people, and community initiatives. Twelve national priorities, each correlated to one or more of the six Supporting Outcomes, are identified as major areas of work between 2009 and 2012, as set out in Table 1 (COAG, 2009b).

Among other salient features of the National Framework are its governance arrangements. Under the overall direction of COAG and CDSMC, a range of consultative and planning forums has been established, with membership drawn from three groups: the Commonwealth Government; state and territory governments; and the NGO Coalition. The National Framework Implementation Working Group (NFIWG), which comprises senior Commonwealth, state and territory officials and representatives of the NGO Coalition, generally meets on a quarterly basis and is charged with the high-level oversight of the National Framework. In turn, working groups reporting to NFIWG have been established on national priority areas such as national standards for out-of-home care, filling the research gaps, and closing the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.


The NGO Coalition also works with governments in a variety of other ways to advance the National Framework. For each of the past three years, for example, it has held annual discussions with the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. NGO Coalition members in various states and territories meet regularly with their governmental counterparts to discuss National Framework issues, and peak
<table>
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<th>Table 1  National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009–2020: National Priority Projects in the first three-year action plan, 2009–12</th>
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<td><strong>National Priority Projects</strong></td>
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<td>Joining up service delivery (Supporting Outcome 2)</td>
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<td>Closing the gap (Supporting Outcome 5)</td>
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<td>Seeing early warning signs and taking early action (Supporting Outcomes 2 and 3)</td>
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<td>Improving support for carers (Supporting Outcome 4)</td>
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<td>Developing national standards for out-of-home care (Supporting Outcome 4)</td>
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<td>Building capacity and expertise (Supporting Outcomes 3 and 5)</td>
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<td>Enhancing the evidence base (Supporting Outcome 4)</td>
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<td>Filling the research gaps (Supporting Outcome 4)</td>
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<td>Transitioning to independence (Supporting Outcome 4)</td>
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<td>Responding to sexual abuse (Supporting Outcome 6)</td>
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<td>Advocating nationally for children and young people (Supporting Outcome 1)</td>
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<td>Sharing information (Supporting Outcome 2)</td>
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Source: COAG (2009b)
NGO bodies at the state level (where they exist) have also played an important role as focal points for NGO Coalition efforts and in promoting the National Framework at state political and official levels.

Assessing progress

Perhaps the most fundamental question that can and should be asked about the National Framework is: has it improved the safety and wellbeing of children? The response, at present at least, has to be that there is no clear answer, for several reasons. Firstly, no formal evaluation of overall progress under the National Framework has yet been conducted. Such an evaluation is planned for the end of the first three-year action plan in 2012 (COAG, 2009a). Secondly, in the absence of an evaluation to date, there are limits to the conclusions that may be drawn from current official data on rates of child abuse and neglect since the commencement of the National Framework. The latest release of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare’s annual report, *Child Protection Australia* (AIHW, 2011), covers only the period up to June 2010, or the first nine months of the first three-year action plan under the National Framework. A third obstacle to assessing progress at present is the relative paucity of data systems to measure a range of National Framework topics. This is acknowledged in CDSMC’s first Annual Report on the National Framework to COAG (CDSMC, 2010a), which included a number of proxy or interim outcome data, and noted that its “catalogue of actions is a necessary starting point. In the longer term, progress will be measured by the key measures and indicators of change but these data systems will take time to mature” (p. 2). Finally, it could be argued that, even with comprehensive, comparable and reliable data systems, it is unrealistic to expect clear trends to be seen so early from an undertaking that is reliant on significant shifts being made in the perceptions and behaviours of many individuals, families, communities, governments (including politicians and officials at all levels) and NGOs.

With these caveats, however, it can be said that the first two years of the National Framework have been largely about important scene-setting in three main respects: building broad-based support; consolidating knowledge; and encouraging innovative practice.

Building support

The task of building support for the National Framework has had political, bureaucratic and community dimensions. At the political level, a critical factor has been ongoing support for the National Framework by the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, The Hon. Jenny Macklin MP, and her department, and The Hon. Julie Collins MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Community Services. Also, one of the most important developments of the past year was the announcement in December 2010 by CDSMC Ministers of the National Standards for Out-of-Home Care (CDSMC, 2010b). Not only were the National Standards the first of their kind in Australia, but they symbolised an important political consensus between Commonwealth, state and territory governments. This was particularly significant given the changes in government that had occurred in two states in the preceding months. It remains, however, for the Standards to come into effect substantively during 2011 and for consequential and related improvements to the wellbeing of children and young people in out-of-home care to be seen, including through the collection and analysis of nationally consistent performance data. A further indicator of the growing national political consensus was the meeting between CDSMC Ministers and NGO Coalition representatives in December 2010 to consider National Framework progress; this was the first such meeting of its kind between CDSMC and NGO representatives and reflected the appreciable growth of the partnership between these sectors (CDSMC, 2010b).

There has also been an increase over the past two years in the level of engagement by, and awareness within, the NGO sector about the National Framework. With a secretariat provided by Families Australia, the Coalition’s membership has grown to over 100 members. Scores of NGO Coalition representatives also participate in a range of joint NGO–government forums, such as the National Framework Implementation Working Group, the National Standards for Out-of-Home Care Working Group, and the Filling the Research Gaps Working Group. Such a degree of collaboration between NGOs and governments is uncommon in many other areas of public policy and might be regarded as an important beacon in efforts to build closer relations between the sectors, especially in the area of policy development, as envisaged in the Commonwealth Government’s “National Compact” between the Commonwealth Government and the NGO sector (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011).

Consolidating and updating knowledge

The past two years have also seen significant advancements in the consolidation and
updating of knowledge about child safety and wellbeing. For example, under the National Priority Project on improving support for carers, the Commonwealth Government commissioned the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of New South Wales to prepare a report into financial and non-financial support to formal and informal out-of-home carers. The resulting report (McHugh & Valentine, 2010) highlights the numerous variations across states and territories in terms of supports for carers, and sets the scene for governments to move towards more nationally consistent approaches. Work is also well advanced in developing a National Research Agenda for 2011–14 on the basis of a National Research Forum in 2009, and a Commonwealth Government-funded National Research Audit, undertaken by the Australian Institute of Family Studies in conjunction with the Social Policy Research Centre. During this time, the Commonwealth Government has continued to fund the National Child Protection Clearinghouse, whose role is to support policy-makers and practitioners with access to the research evidence relating to protecting children (see <www.aifs.gov.au/nch>.

Another important initial National Framework project has been to develop and implement nationally consistent approaches to supporting young people leaving out-of-home care. In December 2010, CDSMC endorsed a discussion paper, developed by NFIWG, that outlined key evidence from the research literature, articulated a vision for the future and proposed steps to improve the effectiveness of the transition from out-of-home care for young people (FaHCSIA & NFIWG, 2010). A further significant step was the release of a Commonwealth Government-funded report by the CREATE Foundation (2010) on consultations with young people with a care experience, to identify key priorities and practical solutions to better assist them to transition from care and to gain independence. CREATE’s What’s the Answer? report contains 58 recommendations to better support young people in areas such as housing, education, employment, financial security, social relationships, support networks and health. This is an important contribution to the goal, under the National Framework’s first three-year plan, of continuing to work on the development and implementation of nationally consistent approaches to support young people leaving care.

**Practice innovation**

In relation to the development of innovative practice, another major National Priority Project under the National Framework has been to develop a common approach to assessment, referral and support (CAARS). Building on a report that was commissioned by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY), Inverting the Pyramid: Enhancing Systems for Protecting Children (Allen Consulting Group, 2009), the Commonwealth Government-funded CAARS project aims to promote the wellbeing and safety of children, young people and families by identifying and responding to early indicators of need. In June 2010, after a year of development work overseen by ARACY, the ministerially appointed CAARS Taskforce endorsed a mechanism—for use by practitioners such as doctors, nurses, child care workers and teachers—that would assist them to identify and respond early to indicators of need. The mechanism is also designed to enhance collaboration among service providers through greater consistency in information-sharing and referral within and between services, as well as to provide timely and child- and family-friendly support pathways for children, young people and families (ARACY, 2010). In early 2011, with the announcement of additional Commonwealth Government funding, the CAARS project entered Phase II, which aims to pilot-test and refine the common approach.

**Next steps**

If the first two years of the National Framework have been principally about scene-setting activities, then a considerable amount rides on what is delivered in the next few years, when many in governments, NGOs and the community will expect these preliminary steps to be transformed into clear, identifiable and tangible improvements in child safety and wellbeing.

The future agenda might be considered in two categories: activities that need to be completed by the end of the first three-year action plan (that is, by mid-to-late 2012); and suggested
key elements for inclusion in the second three-year plan (2012–15).

A considerable amount of work remains to be done by mid-2012 to complete the current three-year plan. At the time of writing (September 2011), key tasks that are to be completed include: developing a plan on priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children; devising a national strategy to develop the child protection and welfare workforce in the areas of education, recruitment, professional development and retention; and reporting on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child protection and welfare workforce.

Looking ahead to the second three-year plan, it is important to plan activities that will make major and appreciable improvements to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. As a national policy that is based on a public health model, the National Framework needs to devote ever-greater attention and resources to early intervention and prevention activities to tackle the fundamental causes of child abuse and neglect, especially in the areas of substance abuse, mental illness and domestic violence. Certainly, the first three-year action plan paid some attention to these, but there is a high degree of consensus among NGO Coalition members that far more investment by all governments is needed in these areas, through means such as social marketing campaigns and more extensive family support programs that focus on the specific needs of families and children. If the first action plan has, for a variety of reasons, tended to focus on shorter term and more targeted measures, the challenge for the next plan is to increase significantly the quantum of public expenditure in the area of universal services for families and children, with the aim of addressing issues before abuse or neglect occurs.

In respect of both early intervention/prevention work and more targeted approaches, the major challenge is to identify with greater precision those areas where investment will deliver the greatest positive outcomes for children and young people. This is a collective challenge, requiring the continued, combined efforts of government, NGO and academic sectors in joint analysis and planning. A significant increase in the amount of state and territory government funding for joint National Priority Projects will also be an important factor in ensuring the success of the National Framework.

There is a strong case for a greater concentration of effort in fewer areas in the next three-year action plan; yet it will also be important for planning to take into account those areas that were deferred or given a lesser priority in the first action plan, such as disability and mental health. While included in the first action plan, another area that requires more attention and resourcing in the next action plan is that of responding to child sexual abuse and exploitation.

Specifically, the next iteration of the National Framework requires targets. It is important that tangible, measurable and meaningful goals are set, to which all parties can aspire, and which can give the broader community some confidence that the problem of child abuse and neglect can be addressed. The absence of targets—for example, about the desired reduced rates of abuse—can predispose parties to the National Framework to be distracted by activities or outputs, at the risk of losing sight of substantive outcomes for children, young people and families. On the other hand, the presence of targets can have strong effects on governments and other players in influencing resource allocation decisions, ensuring activities are evaluated for their effectiveness, and identifying areas that require more attention.

Another area for future development concerns accountability. While there is an extensive mechanism for the monitoring of National Framework activities already in place, there is a case for an independent national assessment and reporting mechanism to be established that regularly tests performance in efforts aimed at better protecting and promoting the wellbeing of children and young people. It would be beneficial to see the differences in performance across jurisdictions, and increase the extent to which governments and the NGO sectors are held to account. An independent National Commissioner for Children and Young People could be an appropriate locus for such work.
Finally, in addition to a significant jump in government funding for National Framework activities in the coming three years, the future of the National Framework rests on a large degree on the continued development of political and community consensus about the importance of child safety and wellbeing matters. The degree of political consensus to date around the National Framework has been encouraging, its continuation and enhancement will be vital in ensuring that the much-needed and visionary national approach to tackling this most difficult of issues remains intact. In the same vein, the next action plan should give special emphasis to promoting greater understanding across all segments of the wider community about child safety and wellbeing matters.

In sum, a considerable distance has been travelled in the past two years, building on the momentum of the preceding decade, to construct a national plan to tackle child abuse and neglect. It is possible to reflect on this period as one that has seen a new collaboration being built between government and NGO sectors and, most importantly, a series of activities is being initiated that has helped to set the scene for substantive improvements in outcomes for children and young people. The key tasks of the next three-year plan under the National Framework will be to consolidate the knowledge and goodwill that has been generated, apply significantly more resources—especially to early intervention efforts—improve ways of measuring achievements and critically acknowledge gaps in performance. Above all, it is vital that we keep our sights firmly fixed on improving the outcomes for children and young people at the earliest possible time. Can there be a more important task?

Endnotes

1 As at September 2011, the NGO Coalition membership numbered 107 NGO representatives and prominent academics, covering a wide range of interests, such as family and child welfare, health, justice, education, family relationships and carers. As many organisations in the NGO Coalition are themselves membership-based or peak representative bodies, the NGO Coalition, in turn, represents many hundreds of NGOs and individuals across Australia.

2 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) figures on which the National Framework was based were alarming. In 2007–08, there were 55,120 reports of harm or risk of harm from child abuse and neglect substantiated by child protection services in Australia, and the rate of substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect had more than doubled in the decade prior (COAG, 2009a, p. 6). The latest AIHW figures show that, despite a recent decrease in notifications and substantiations, child abuse and neglect persists as a matter of major national concern. In the 12 months to June 2010, the number of children subject to a child abuse or neglect notification decreased by 10% from 207,462 to 187,314; the number of children subject to a substantiation of a notification decreased by 4% from 32,641 to 31,295; and the number of children on care and protection orders increased by 7% from 35,409 to 37,730. Between June 2005 and June 2010, the number of children on care and protection orders increased by 57% from 24,075 to 37,730, and the number of children in out-of-home care rose by 51% from 25,695 to 35,895. In 2009–10, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were almost eight times as likely to be the subject of substantiations as non-Indigenous children.

3 National Framework-specific contributions by state and territory governments have been mainly of an in-kind form, such as the cost of participating in Framework policy development, implementation and reporting processes and supporting jurisdiction-level consultations on national priority projects. The NGO sector, principally through the NGO Coalition, contributes substantially to National Framework implementation in financial and in-kind contributions. The Commonwealth Government provides ongoing funding to Families Australia to act as the NGO Coalition secretariat.

References


It is vital that we keep our sights firmly fixed on improving the outcomes for children and young people at the earliest possible time.
It is important that tangible, measurable and meaningful goals are set.


Brian Babington is Chief Executive Officer of Families Australia, an independent, national, not-for-profit public policy body, and the coordinator of the Coalition of Organisations Committed to the Safety and Wellbeing of Australia’s Children. He is a member of the National Framework Implementation Working Group. The views expressed in this paper are the author’s and do not necessarily reflect those of Families Australia or the NGO Coalition. The author’s perspective is that of a leading participant in the development of thinking in the NGO sector since 2005 about a national strategy on protecting children, and in the negotiation and, now, the implementation, of the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children.

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