



Australian Government

Early Years Strategy

2024–2034

First Action Plan 2024–2027

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Australian Government acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, water, culture and community. We pay our respects to the Elders both past and present.

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Introduction

What is the First Action Plan?

The [Early Years Strategy 2024-2034](#) (the Strategy) was launched on 7 May 2024 and sets out the Australian Government's vision to best support Australia's children and their families in the early years.

The Strategy will be delivered through three action plans over 10 years. This First Action Plan will start in 2024 and cover the period from 2024 to 2027. The Second Action Plan is expected to cover the period from 2027 to 2030, while the Third Action Plan is expected to cover the period from 2030 to 2034.

This approach allows us to be agile and responsive to contemporary challenges and opportunities as they emerge over the next decade, while still retaining an enduring focus on the overarching long-term vision and outcomes the Strategy is seeking to achieve.

This Action Plan outlines the practical steps the Government is taking to support the education, development and wellbeing of young children in Australia over the next 3 years, in line with the Strategy's 4 priority focus areas.

It follows on from the [Whole-of-Government Investment in the Early Years Progress Update](#) that was released alongside the Strategy and summarised the Government's investments in the early years as at May 2024.

This Action Plan builds on the significant work and investments the Government is already taking to improve outcomes for young children in Australia, while also capturing new actions across Government that will deliver meaningful results for young children and their families in the early years.

While the Strategy and this Action Plan focus on the Commonwealth's activity in the early years, we recognise that achieving the Strategy's vision requires a collective effort. Across all levels of government – including Commonwealth, state, territory and local – the early years system, the early years workforce, the philanthropic sector, communities and families, we all have a role to play in implementing the Strategy and supporting children to thrive.

In addition to the actions included in this Action Plan, there is significant existing Government investment in the early years, including policies, programs and services for families that will either directly or indirectly benefit young children. There are also numerous initiatives and reforms underway.

[Appendix 2 of the Strategy](#) provides an overview of existing Government activity related to the early years.

Who is the First Action Plan for?

Like the Strategy, this Action Plan is for every child in their early years in Australia, as well as their parents, caregivers, families, kin and the communities who support them.

In the Strategy, the early years of a child's life refers to the antenatal period right through to 5 years of age. This period is often referred to as the first 2,000 days. This time is a critical window of opportunity where it is possible to positively influence children's development, sense of identity, health, learning, safety, resilience and happiness.

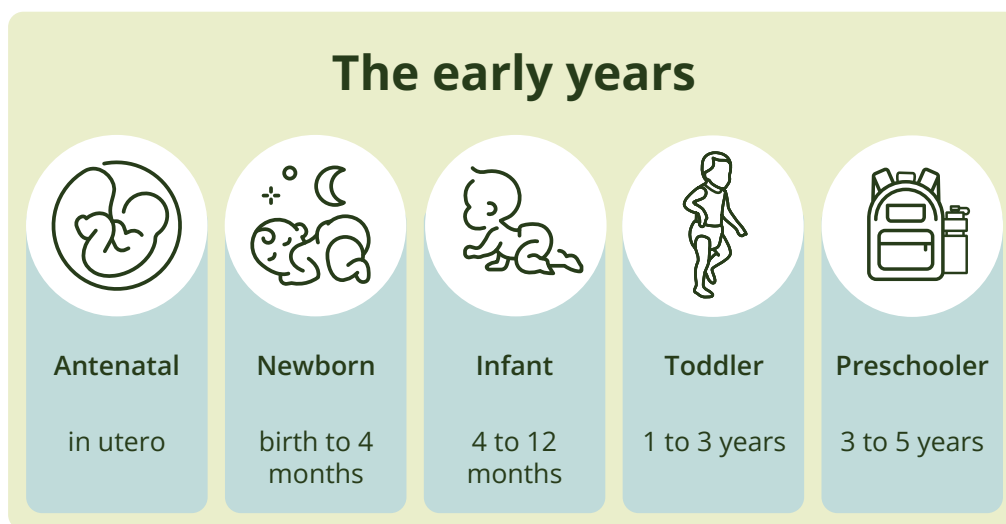


Figure 1: Stages of growth and development in the early years

As with the Strategy, we understand that every child in Australia is unique. This Action Plan recognises, respects and reflects this diversity. We acknowledge, value and embrace the similarities and differences among children. This Action Plan is for all children in Australia.

We recognise the unique strengths and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. This includes connection to family, kin, community, culture and Country, which support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to develop a sense of belonging and to grow up healthy and strong.

We acknowledge the important role of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled (ACCO) sector in co-designing and delivering high-quality, culturally safe services and supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in the early years, in line with Priority Reform 2 under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (Closing the Gap).

We also recognise and celebrate the multiculturalism of Australian society. We understand children from multicultural backgrounds also have a rich cultural heritage of their own, and staying connected to their culture can help them to thrive and create a strong sense of identity and belonging.

Any reference to parents, caregivers and families in this Action Plan acknowledges the diversity of people who fulfil these important relationship roles for the young children in their lives. This includes biological and adoptive parents, LGBTIQA+ parents, kin / kinship systems and other caregivers, extended family members and many combinations of these.

What is the scope of the First Action Plan?

While many actions in this Action Plan are directly focused on children and families in the early years, some actions may have a broader scope, for example children 0-12 years or children 4-18 years. Where relevant, such actions have been included in this Action Plan because they still have an impact on the early years of a child's life, even if their influence and scope is broader than just the first 5 years.

The actions in this Action Plan align with the holistic, strengths-based nature of the Strategy and focus on many different aspects of children's wellbeing, including their education, health, safety, basic needs and sense of belonging. Many of the actions also reflect the Strategy's broader focus on supporting families and communities, recognising that children grow and develop in the context of their families, kin, community and society. This Action Plan acknowledges that action to improve outcomes for young children must encompass all of these spheres.

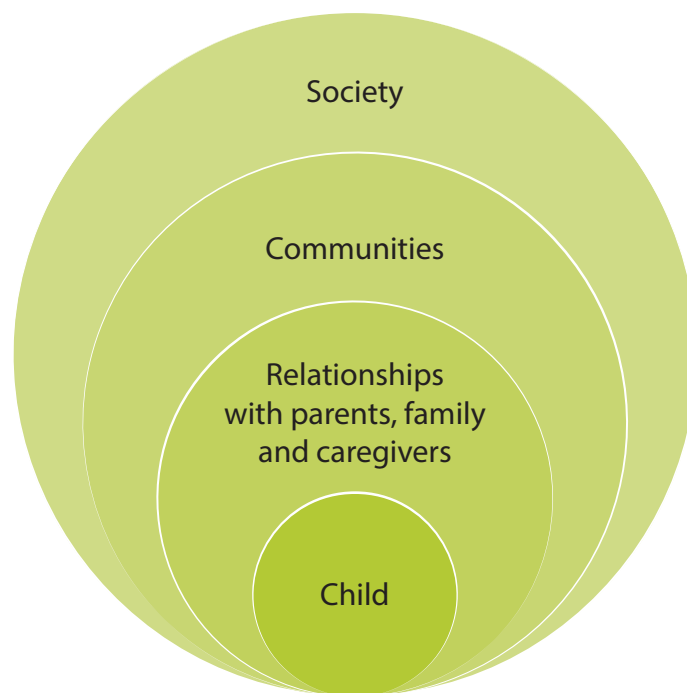


Figure 2: Social ecology of child development

We know that while many young children in Australia are thriving, some aren't doing as well as they could be. Some families may also want or need more help to do the important job of raising children. Some actions in this Action Plan are universal, meaning they are available to all children and families in Australia, while others are more targeted to those who may need additional support to ensure **all children can thrive and reach their full potential**.

How is the First Action Plan structured?

The Strategy includes four priority focus areas, which set out where the Government will direct efforts to achieve the Strategy's vision and outcomes. Under each priority focus area, there are several sub-priorities that outline what we will do to support the priority focus areas over the life of the Strategy. These are:

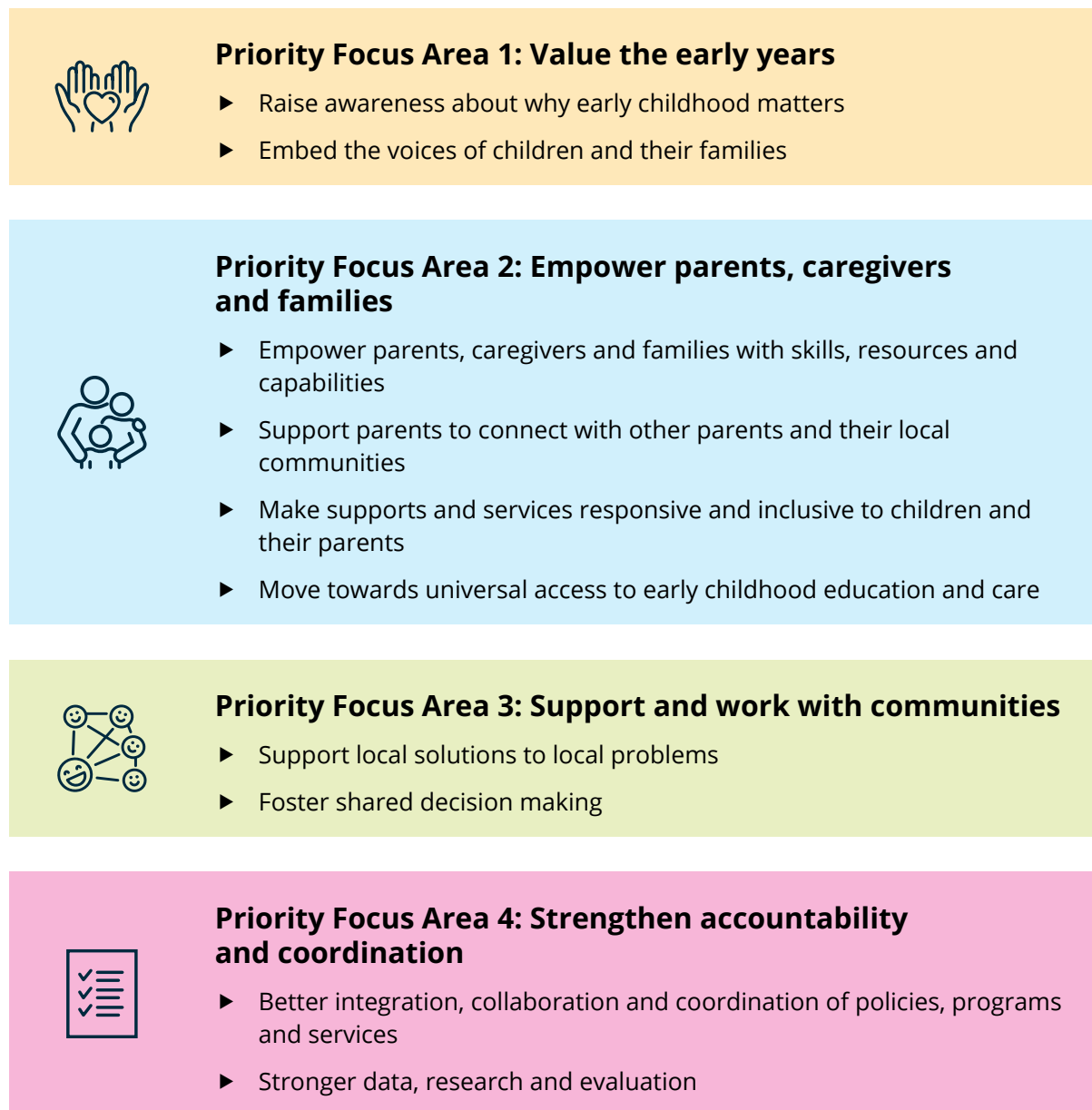


Figure 3: Priority focus areas and sub-priorities in the Strategy

These areas will form the basis of the 3 action plans over the life of the Strategy. Activity under each focus area and sub-priority will be spread across the three action plans, and each action plan will have a different focus.

In this Action Plan, each action is assigned to one of the four priority focus areas in the Strategy. However, we recognise that some actions will contribute to more than one priority focus area. The links between and across the priority focus areas will be carefully considered during the implementation of this Action Plan.

Each action has a timeframe and a lead Government department. Lead departments are responsible for implementing the actions included in this Action Plan.

The Strategy and this Action Plan reinforce the Government's commitment to Closing the Gap in ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have the opportunity to thrive in their early years. They also recognise and leverage existing efforts to improve early childhood outcomes for First Nations children and their families, including under the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (ECCDPP), the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy and the Early Childhood Care and Development Sector Strengthening Plan.

Many of the actions in this Action Plan contribute towards the Closing the Gap Priority Reforms and Outcomes, in particular Outcome 2 (Children are born healthy and strong), Outcome 3 (Children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years) and Outcome 4 (Children thrive in their early years). Lead agencies will be responsible for ensuring the delivery of their actions aligns with and supports the Closing the Gap Priority Reforms and Targets.

Further background on the Strategy is included at **Appendix A**. More detail on how the Strategy is expected to support change over the next decade is at **Appendix B**. A glossary of key terms used in this Action Plan can be found at **Appendix C**.

What is the focus of the First Action Plan?

There are four key areas where the Government will prioritise action and investment during the life of this Action Plan. Each of these areas aligns with a specific priority focus area and sub-priority in the Strategy ([see Figure 3 on page 4](#)).

Priority Focus Area 1: Value the early years



Key focus in this Action Plan: Embedding the voices of children and their families

During 2024-2027, we will elevate the voices of children and families to make sure they are placed at the centre of Government decision making and embedded in the policies, programs and services that affect them. We are doing this through:

- ▶ the establishment of a **Parents and Carers Reference Group**, which will allow parents and caregivers (including those from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds, those with disability or those who have children with disability) to have a say on what the Government is doing to support our youngest children and what matters most to them, and
- ▶ the establishment of a new **National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People**, who will work directly with First Nations children and young people and listen to and amplify their voices, needs and aspirations, along with the broader community.

Government education officials from the Commonwealth and States and Territories are also working together to develop a **Voice of Children framework** to help guide their work in the early childhood education and care (ECEC) context to better reflect the views and needs of children when developing policies and programs that impact them.

We are developing **new resources and information** to raise awareness about the importance of early childhood and give children a strong start in life, including resources to help Autistic children thrive.

We also recognise that focusing on prevention in the early years will lay the foundation for good health and wellbeing across the life course and we are also investing in measures to promote and support healthy pregnancies and deliver high quality care during the antenatal and postnatal period. This includes support for breastfeeding and perinatal mental health and wellbeing, raising awareness about the importance of childhood immunisation, as well as expanding and supporting the consistency of newborn bloodspot screening to improve outcomes for newborns in Australia.

We understand the devastating impact of family, domestic and sexual violence (FDSV) and recognise children and young people as victim survivors in their own right. The voices of children and families will inform the design of a new **National Model of Care**, to ensure the safety and recovery needs of children and young people who have experienced FDSV in emergency accommodation are met.

We are also taking steps to ensure children can see and hear themselves and the rich diversity of Australian society reflected in the **screen content** that they engage with, contributing to their sense of identity, belonging and wellbeing.



Key focus in this Action Plan: Moving towards universal access to early childhood education and care

The Government is **building a universal system** where every child is guaranteed access to at least three days of high-quality early education and care, which is simple, affordable and accessible for every family. On 11 December 2024, the Australian Government announced **next steps to building a universal early education and care system** by expanding access to quality early education across the country.

Transitioning Australia to a universal early childhood education and care (ECEC) system will require a planned approach which ensures transition steps are taken responsibly, and maintains the strong foundations already established in the system such as our world-renowned National Quality Framework.

A future ECEC system will build on the gains already made to the affordability of ECEC. Through the Government's **Cheaper Child Care** changes, we have delivered cost-of-living relief for more than one million Australian families and ensured more children can access the benefits of ECEC before they start school.

Since the Cheaper Child Care policy came into place, average out-of-pocket costs in the first year were lower for Australian families. The Child Care Subsidy increased to the maximum of 90 per cent for families earning \$80,000 or less from July 2023, with **higher subsidy** rates for all families earning up to \$530,000.

We know that there are some challenges in the ECEC system that we are starting to address early, including building a strong and sustainable ECEC workforce. As a first step to achieving this, we are providing funding to support a **wage increase for the ECEC workforce of 15 per cent above the modern award rates** over two years. This historic pay rise recognises the critical role that early childhood educators play in young children's lives and in supporting parents to work or study. This funding will be conditional on providers agreeing to limit fee increases.



Key focus in this Action Plan: Supporting local solutions to local problems

We are committed to working differently to achieve better outcomes for children and families. This includes working in partnership with communities to ensure our policies, programs and services are flexible and respond to local priorities and needs. The Government has invested over \$200 million in a **Targeting Entrenched Disadvantage (TED) package** to disrupt intergenerational cycles of disadvantage and improve child and family wellbeing.

Under the TED package, the Government has invested \$7.8 million to develop a **Whole of Government Framework to Support Community Change**, which aims to embed a joined-up and innovative approach to addressing entrenched disadvantage by shifting how Government works to support place-based approaches and Social Impact Investing initiatives, to achieve better outcomes with communities. The Framework will be applied and refined through a range of innovative approaches with communities and other stakeholders as part of the TED package, which includes:

- ▶ A 10-year strategy to partner with philanthropy through the **Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children (IDAC)**, enabling the Government and philanthropy, in partnership with community, to better coordinate efforts and target investments to increase collective impact in the early years.
- ▶ A **\$100 million Outcomes Fund** which will see the Commonwealth partner with states, territories and social enterprises to tackle disadvantage by funding projects that support positive outcomes for children and families and disrupt cycles of intergenerational and community disadvantage.
- ▶ **\$64 million to extend the Stronger Places, Stronger People (SPSP) initiative** to enable community-led change in partnership with 10 communities and States and Territories, and to enhance shared decision-making and local solutions in 6 of these communities.
- ▶ **\$16.4 million for a Life Course Data Initiative (LCDI)** that will capture data insights to improve our understanding of how communities experience disadvantage, including through longitudinal data. This will help guide local decision making and better direct funding. The LCDI will also trial new ways of engaging communities about their data needs through the establishment of two **Community Data Liaison Officers**.

This way of working will also be refined through existing Commonwealth place-based initiatives to support the early years, such as Connected Beginnings and Empowered Communities.

Additionally, the Government has invested \$19.3 million over 5 years from 2024-25 to establish **Partnerships for Local Action and Community Empowerment (PLACE)**. PLACE is a joint initiative with philanthropy, with 5 philanthropic partners providing matched funding over the 5 years. PLACE is a national, independent, not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting the needs and aspirations of local communities.

Through the **Financial Wellbeing and Capability Activity**, we are also committed to supporting the wellbeing of financially vulnerable children, families and communities. Through early intervention and crisis supports, the Activity helps to ensure basic needs are being met.

Priority Focus Area 4: Strengthen accountability and coordination



Key focus in this Action Plan: Strengthening data, research and evaluation

Data, research and evaluation are essential to understand how a child's experiences growing up shape and influence their later life outcomes. To achieve the Strategy's vision for all children to thrive in their early years and reach their full potential, we need to be able to measure outcomes for young children, report on progress to the Australian community and understand whether our actions are having the impact we want them to have.

We have developed an **Outcomes Framework** to assist in measuring the wellbeing of young children, families and communities in Australia over the life of the Strategy. The Outcomes Framework includes measurable indicators that will allow us to monitor and track progress against the Strategy's vision and outcomes, report on trends and changes in early childhood outcomes over time, and better understand how Australia's children, families and communities are faring holistically across several domains.

We will also develop a **Monitoring and Evaluation Framework** in 2025 to monitor and evaluate the impact of actions in the action plans against the Strategy's vision and outcomes. This will also help to evaluate the overall impact of the Strategy.



We are continuing to work with the **LCDI**, which received \$16.4 million as part of the Government's over \$200 million TED package. The LCDI will capture data insights to improve our understanding of how communities experience disadvantage, including through a longitudinal dataset for a birth cohort in 2006-07. This will help to generate insights about how experiences in the early years may influence later life outcomes.



We are committed to better supporting people with disability to develop and lead research through the implementation of the **National Disability Research Partnership** initiative, which includes a specific focus on the education and research needs of children with disability. We are also funding critical research into improving health outcomes in the early years, as well as the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.

We are committed to driving better early childhood outcomes through enhanced accountability and coordination across Commonwealth portfolios, including through cross-portfolio governance mechanisms, as well as **formal partnership agreements and ongoing funding** for First Nations Peaks Bodies. This funding will help to strengthen relationships with Government and ensure First Nations children, families and communities can participate in the co-design, delivery and evaluation of services and strategies that create positive change in the early years, in line with Closing the Gap.

Summary of actions in the First Action Plan

Below is an overview of actions included in this Action Plan, mapped against each priority focus area in the Strategy.

Priority Focus Area	Action
<p>1: Value the early years</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Develop a National Model of Care for emergency accommodation 1.2 Support the production of Australian children’s screen content 1.3 New resources helping Autistic children to thrive 1.4 Increased support for breastfeeding 1.5 Support for reducing alcohol use in pregnancy 1.6 Raising awareness about the importance of childhood immunisation 1.7 Newborn bloodspot screening expansion 1.8 Reducing stillbirth 1.9 Preventing pre-term and early term births 1.10 Australian Pregnancy Care Guidelines and Australian Postnatal Care Guidelines 1.11 Perinatal mental health screening 1.12 Establish a Parents and Carers Reference Group 1.13 Elevate the voices of First Nations children and young people with the National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People 1.14 Develop a Voice of Children Framework
<p>2: Empower parents, caregivers and families</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 Improving parenting confidence and supporting and promoting shared care 2.2 Enhancing Government-funded Paid Parental Leave 2.3 Implementing Parent Pathways 2.4 One Talk at a Time campaign 2.5 Guidelines for the Classification of Computer Games 2023 2.6 Review of the Online Safety Act 2.7 Extending support for culturally safe, continuity midwifery for First Nations mothers and babies 2.8 Funding existing and establishing new playgroups and toy libraries 2.9 Foundational Supports for children, families, carers and kin 2.10 Amendments to the Family Law Act 2.11 Enhancements to the Family Relationships Services Program 2.12 Improving child-centric trauma-informed supports for children and young people 2.13 Safe Places Emergency Accommodation 2.14 Crisis and Transitional Accommodation Program 2.15 Worker Retention Payment 2.16 Building a universal early education and care system

Priority Focus Area	Action
<p>3: Support and work with communities</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3.1 Whole of Government Framework to Support Community Change <li>3.2 Commonwealth Outcomes Fund <li>3.3 Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children <li>3.4 Increased funding for the Stronger Places, Stronger People initiative <li>3.5 Partnerships for Local Action and Community Empowerment (PLACE) <li>3.6 Increased funding for financially vulnerable people and communities <li>3.7 Indigenous Advancement Strategy early years investment review <li>3.8 East Kimberley Place-Based Partnership <li>3.9 Work with Empowered Communities
<p>4: Strengthen accountability and coordination</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4.1 First Nations Partnership Funding, Education Policy and Education Programs Extension <li>4.2 Implement and promote the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations <li>4.3 Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (ECCDPP) <li>4.4 Enhanced national arrangements for sharing child safety and wellbeing information <li>4.5 Early Years Strategy Outcomes Framework <li>4.6 Implement the Life Course Data Initiative (LCDI) <li>4.7 Implement the National Disability Research Partnership (NDRP) initiative <li>4.8 Research to improve maternal and child health <li>4.9 Understanding child and adolescent mental health





Actions in the First Action Plan

Priority Focus Area 1: Value the early years

When our policies and programs reflect the voices and perspectives of children and families, we have the best chance of supporting and responding to their needs holistically.

The Government is taking action to listen to and elevate the voices of children and families. This will ensure they are included in Government decisions and can have a say on the policies, programs and services that affect them. We are doing this through the establishment of a new **Parents and Carers Reference Group** and a **National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People**.

The voices of children and families will also inform a new **National Model of Care** (NMOC) to ensure emergency accommodation services are suitable for children who have witnessed or experienced family, sexual or domestic violence and their safety and recovery needs are met.

We know how important it is for Australian children to be able to see themselves reflected on screen, contributing to a positive sense of identity and belonging, and contributing to their understanding of their place in the world. That's why the Government is supporting the production of **locally produced Australian children's screen content** – to make sure audiences have access to the diversity, breadth and depth of Australian children's stories.

We also understand the critical importance of the early years and want to make sure everyone has the knowledge and information they need to support young children to thrive and seek help when needed. The Government is **developing a range of resources** to support early childhood development and **raise awareness** about the importance of the early years. This includes new

resources to build the capacity of practitioners to deliver the best services for Autistic children, while empowering families and carers to make informed choices.

We recognise that focusing on prevention in the early years lays the foundations for good health and wellbeing across the life course, from the preconception period onwards. Preventing risk factors for chronic conditions, injuries and infectious disease while also enhancing protective factors in early childhood such as healthy eating, physical activity and adequate sleep are critical to creating strong foundations in later life.

We are investing in important health initiatives to give all children the best start in life, including measures to support healthy pregnancies and ensure high quality care during pregnancy and the postnatal period, as well as continued support for breastfeeding. We are also expanding newborn bloodspot screening to improve outcomes for newborns. These measures align with Aim 1 under the *National Preventative Health Strategy 2021-2030*.

Parents and Carers Reference Group

To support the Strategy, the Government has established a new Parents and Carers Reference Group (PCRG) to elevate the voices of children and their families in the policies, programs and services that affect them. The PCRG will allow us to hear directly from parents and caregivers about their needs, their children's needs, and how best to support them.

The PCRG was established in 2024 and will operate until 30 June 2029. It will help shape the future of policies and services for children aged 0-12 years and their families by:

- ▶ providing parents and caregivers with an opportunity to have a say on what we are doing to support our youngest children, and
- ▶ allowing us to hear directly from parents and caregivers on what matters to them, which will help us make decisions and improve policies.

PCRG members will share their experience and knowledge on the needs of children. They will also share their thoughts on how the Government can better help children and their families. We will use this information to inform future initiatives and improve how we support children and their families.

The PCRG is made up of a diverse group of parents and caregivers from across Australia, with different backgrounds and life experiences. It also has members from peak bodies in child wellbeing and development.

Members were selected through an Expression of Interest process, which closed in September 2024.



Raise awareness about why early childhood matters

Action	Overview	Timeframe	Lead Australian Government Department
1.1 Develop a National Model of Care for emergency accommodation	We are ensuring emergency accommodation services are suitable for children, and effectively address their needs, through a commitment to develop a National Model of Care (NMOC). The NMOC will be used by the family, domestic and sexual violence sector to ensure that the safety and recovery needs of children and young people in emergency accommodation settings are met.	To be developed by June 2026	Department of Social Services
1.2 Support the production of Australian children's screen content	In recognition of the importance of Australian children seeing and hearing themselves reflected in the stories they watch, we are supporting the production of Australian children's screen content. Access to quality Australian children's content is vital for developing and reflecting a sense of Australian identity, character and cultural diversity for young audiences.	Australian Children's Television Foundation provided with additional funding from 1 July 2024 Proposed children's Australian screen content sub-quotas under streaming obligations	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
1.3 New resources helping Autistic children to thrive	We have released a new suite of implementation resources, including an eLearning course, based on the <i>National Guideline for supporting the learning, participation, and wellbeing of Autistic children and their families in Australia</i> . The resources will build the capacity of practitioners to deliver the best services and supports for Autistic children, but also empower families and carers to make informed choices.	Released in April 2024	Department of Social Services
1.4 Increased support for breastfeeding	We are providing more support for women with premature babies through \$6 million in funding to expand access to donor breast milk bank services. New mothers and babies will also benefit from \$4.8 million in continued funding for 24-hour support from the Australian Breastfeeding Association's National Breastfeeding Helpline.	Funded from 2023-24 to 2024-25	Department of Health and Aged Care

Action	Overview	Timeframe	Lead Australian Government Department
1.5 Support for reducing alcohol use in pregnancy	<p>We are continuing to invest in measures to support Australians to go alcohol-free through all stages of pregnancy, right from the moment they start trying to get pregnant. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ A \$5 million extension of the Every Moment Matters campaign, which shares the latest evidence-based information about alcohol during pregnancy, while planning a pregnancy and breastfeeding. ▶ A \$1.4 million extension of the Strong Born campaign to create materials and resources for rural and remote First Nations communities. Further funding will also expand the reach of these materials, including into more urban settings. 	Funded until 2025	Department of Health and Aged Care
1.6 Raising awareness of the importance of childhood immunisation	<p>We are extending the public information campaign for routine childhood immunisations to raise awareness about their importance and remind parents to get children vaccinated.</p> <p>The One more way you keep them safe childhood immunisation campaign was launched in 2023 and extended in 2024. The campaign aims to reassure parents and carers of the benefits of routine childhood vaccinations, while increasing their confidence and understanding of the vaccines under the National Immunisation Program schedule.</p>	Campaign launched in 2023 and extended in August 2024	Department of Health and Aged Care
1.7 Newborn bloodspot screening expansion	<p>We are increasing the number and consistency of conditions screened through newborn bloodspot screening in Australia, through investment of \$64 million.</p> <p>This investment will improve outcomes for newborns through enabling early identification and management of rare conditions, and ensure all babies across Australia are being screened for the same conditions.</p>	Funding is provided over six years, from 2022-23 to 2027-28	Department of Health and Aged Care
1.8 Reducing stillbirth	<p>We are implementing measures to reduce stillbirth including developing a Clinical Care Standard, strengthening guidelines relating to care following stillbirth and implementing the Safer Baby Bundle (SBB). This has included adapting the SBB for First Nations and migrant and refugee communities and implementing stillbirth education and awareness programs targeted at these communities.</p>	<p>Clinical Care Standard launched 2024</p> <p>SBB cultural adaptation rollout from 2023-34</p>	Department of Health and Aged Care

Action	Overview	Timeframe	Lead Australian Government Department
1.9 Preventing pre-term and early births	<p>We are continuing strategies to prevent pre-term and early-term birth and reduce the number of babies born too early across Australia, particularly in First Nations communities where rates are almost double the rate among non-Indigenous people.</p> <p>Strategies include providing timely preventative care to pregnant women and promoting continuity of care models, which have been shown to improve pregnancy outcomes, particularly in First Nations communities.</p>	Continuing strategies to commence from February 2025	Department of Health and Aged Care
1.10 Australian Pregnancy Care Guidelines and Australian Postnatal Care Guidelines	We are updating the Australian Pregnancy Care Guidelines and developing new Australian Postnatal Care Guidelines to ensure health professionals have up to date, evidence-based recommendations to guide clinical care. This helps ensure women receive high quality care during pregnancy and the postnatal period.	Ongoing, to be maintained as living guidelines to June 2028	Department of Health and Aged Care
1.11 Perinatal mental health screening	<p>We are funding two perinatal mental health screening initiatives, totalling \$80.8 million. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ National Perinatal Mental Health Check - \$33.4 million over 5 years from 2020-21 to support states and territories to enhance digital perinatal mental health screening and data collection. This includes \$14.47 million to the Centre of Perinatal Excellence (COPE) to undertake a perinatal mental health awareness campaign and provide states with free access to the iCOPE digital perinatal screening tool. ▶ Universal Perinatal Mental Health Screening - \$47.7 million over 4 years from 2021-22 to support states and territories to achieve universal perinatal mental health screening across public antenatal and postnatal care settings. This includes continued access to the iCOPE screening tool and funding the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) to develop and manage a national perinatal mental health data set. 	Funded over 5 years to 2024-25	Department of Health and Aged Care

Embed the voices of children and their families

Action	Overview	Timeframe	Lead Australian Government Department
1.12 Establish a Parents and Carers Reference Group	We are ensuring the perspectives of parents and carers are at the heart of all our future policies, programs and services through the establishment of a Parents and Carers Reference Group (PCRG). The PCRG allows us to hear from parents and caregivers about their needs, their children’s needs, what works, and provide valuable insight on how to support them (see feature box on page 14).	Established Nov 2024, for 5 years	Department of Social Services
1.13 Elevate the voices of First Nations children and young people with the National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People	<p>The Government has committed \$5.9 million over two years from 2024-25 to establish the inaugural National Commissioner, as a first step towards a legislated, independent and empowered National Commissioner.</p> <p>The National Commissioner will be dedicated to protecting and promoting the rights, interests and wellbeing of First Nations children and young people.</p> <p>They will work directly with First Nations children and young people and listen to and amplify their voices, needs and aspirations, along with the broader community.</p>	To be established on 13 January 2025	Department of Social Services / National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People
1.14 Develop a Voice of Children Framework	<p>Government education officials from the Commonwealth and States and Territories are working together to develop a framework to help guide officials to effectively reflect the voice of children when developing policies and programs that impact children in an ECEC context.</p> <p>The framework will complement current Government engagement mechanisms with other stakeholders including parents and carers, and ECEC services.</p>	Early 2025	Department of Education



Priority Focus Area 2: Empower parents, caregivers and families

The Government acknowledges the important role of parents and caregivers in young children's lives, and seeks to empower them with the skills, resources and information they need to give their children the best start in life.

We are investing in services, resources and supports for parents and caregivers to **build their confidence and capability to be children's first teachers**. This will support more equal caregiving between parents, for example through initiatives that aim to build men's confidence to be primary or equal caregivers while enabling more women to work to their preferred levels, in alignment with Outcome 2.1 under *Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality*.

This includes enhancing Government-funded **Paid Parental Leave** and additional funding for parenting and community support programs, as well as implementing **Parent Pathways**, a new voluntary pre-employment service, which will support parents and carers of young children to build their capabilities and confidence to work towards their education and employment goals by the time their youngest child starts school.

We are also providing additional funding for **playgroups and toy libraries** to provide social and parenting support for parents and carers, foster community connection, promote information sharing and referrals to specialised supports and services, and ensure children can enjoy developmentally appropriate toys.

Commonwealth and State and Territory governments are working together to improve outcomes for young children by making improvements both within and outside the National Disability

Insurance Scheme (NDIS) that enable children to be included and fully participate in mainstream opportunities that support their early development, alongside their peers.

The *National Disability Insurance Scheme (Getting the NDIS Back on Track) Amending Act 2024* established the legislative framework for improving the NDIS for all participants, including children. Work is continuing to improve how supports within the NDIS operate for children with developmental delay and disability.

Governments are also working together to consult on **Foundational Supports** for children with developmental delay and disability, and their families, carers and kin. Foundational Supports are additional supports to mainstream services and the NDIS.

Governments are engaging with the community on these reforms and how the NDIS pathway will integrate with Foundational Supports. An effective early childhood approach within the NDIS, alongside a new system of Foundational Supports, aims to give children the best possible start in life.

We understand the importance of an inclusive and responsive system of supports and services for children and their families and are working to make the changes necessary to deliver on this.

We are also committed to supporting children and families who have experienced or witnessed family, domestic or sexual violence by working with sector experts and stakeholders, including children and young people with lived experience, to inform child-centric trauma-informed supports; and by improving access to emergency accommodation for First Nations women and children, women and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, women and children with disability, and those who experience the intersection of racism, ableism and sexism.

We are also improving online safety through new guidelines and raising awareness on the classification of computer games and ensuring online service providers are accountable through the Review of the Online Safety Act.

The Government is **building a universal system** where every child is guaranteed access to at least three days of high-quality early education and care, which is simple, affordable and accessible for every family. Every child has the right to go to early education, and universal early childhood education and care (ECEC) will help make sure children don't start school behind. Accessible and affordable early learning is also critical for supporting more people, especially women, to have a choice when it comes to undertaking study, re-entering the workforce or increasing their hours of work.

We will also continue to:

- ▶ engage in ongoing work towards Closing the Gap targets and priority reforms by working in genuine partnership with the ACCO sector and other First Actions peak bodies and stakeholders,
- ▶ support ECEC services to be high quality and inclusive for all children, regardless of their needs or circumstances,
- ▶ improve the quality of services and safety of children attending ECEC settings, including through the implementation of Child Safety Review recommendations, and
- ▶ ensure the integrity of the ECEC system and protection of the Government's investment in early learning and care through integrity measures to deter and detect misuse of the Child Care Subsidy.

The ECEC sector supports parents and carers to engage in the workforce, undertake further education, training or volunteering in their community, knowing their child is in the safe care of skilled educators and teachers that support children’s wellbeing and development.



Action 2.15: ECEC Worker Retention Payment

The workforce is critical to ensure the provision of high quality ECEC is available for Australian children and their families. The Productivity Commission has highlighted that a fairly paid workforce is an important step towards building a universal early education system. This is why the Australian Government is supporting a wage increase for the ECEC workforce.

The Government will provide funding through a new worker retention payment (the Payment), supporting a wage increase of 15% over two years, including 10% on top of the current national award rate in the first year (2 December 2024 to 30 November 2025) and an additional 5% in the second year (1 December 2025 to 30 November 2026).

The Payment started in December 2024 and will run for two years. Providers will need to apply for the Payment which will be paid in the form of a grant. Child Care Subsidy approved Centre Based Day Care and Outside School Hours Care providers who meet the grant conditions are eligible.

The Payment is conditional on providers limiting fee growth; engaging staff through workplace instruments that meet grant conditions; and passing on all funding to eligible workers through increased wages.

Empower parents, caregivers and families with skills, resources and capabilities

Action	Overview	Timeframe/ Milestones	Lead Australian Government Department
2.1 Improving parenting confidence and supporting and promoting shared care	<p>We are extending existing community support to empower parents and caregivers and improve child outcomes in the early years. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ A \$4 million extension of funding over 2 years to the Raising Children Network to further build parenting skills, knowledge and improve equitable access to information for all parents and caregivers. ▶ A \$4.8 million extension of funding over 2 years to The Fathering Project to provide targeted parenting support for fathers and father figures, building their confidence to be primary or equal caregivers. ▶ New funding of \$4.3 million over 2 years to the Brave Foundation to run the Supporting Expecting and Parenting Teens Program. This program provides mentoring and case management support for young parents to strengthen their parenting skills, achieve their educational goals and participate more fully in the workforce. 	Funded from 2024 to 2026	Department of Social Services
2.2 Enhancing Government-funded Paid Parental Leave	<p>We are expanding Government-funded Paid Parental Leave (PPL). From 1 July 2024, two more weeks of payment have been added to PPL, with two more to be added each year until the overall length of the scheme reaches 26 weeks by July 2026.</p> <p>We have also legislated paying superannuation on Government-funded PPL. Under this change, eligible parents with babies born or adopted on or after 1 July 2025 will receive an additional payment, based on the Superannuation Guarantee (12 per cent of their PPL payment), as a contribution to their nominated superannuation fund.</p> <p>These reforms will provide more support for parents who take time off work to care for their babies, reduce the impact of parental leave on retirement incomes and help to normalise parental leave as a workplace entitlement.</p>	Expansion from 1 July 2024 Superannuation from 1 July 2025	Department of Social Services

Action	Overview	Timeframe/ Milestones	Lead Australian Government Department
2.3 Implementing Parent Pathways	<p>Parent Pathways is a new voluntary pre-employment service for eligible parents and carers of children under 6 years. It will deliver an effective, efficient and culturally responsive pre-employment service to assist parents and carers to achieve their future goals while recognising that caring for children is important work.</p> <p>The design of Parent Pathways was informed by feedback from extensive consultations with a broad range of parents and carers about the support they want and need.</p> <p>Parent Pathways takes a strengths-based and parent and carer-led approach to service delivery that places them at the centre of decisions about the support they receive. This may include financial support to assist them to meet their goals, as well as support to access services in their local community.</p>	2024-2026	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
2.4 One Talk at a Time campaign	<p>The \$22.4 million One Talk at a Time campaign (the campaign) aims to help prevent child sexual abuse by encouraging adults to learn about the issue and have ongoing, proactive, preventative conversations with children, young people and other adults.</p> <p>The National Office for Child Safety (within the Attorney-General's Department) has developed a range of resources to support the community to engage with the campaign. This includes a factsheet about child sexual abuse, a toolkit to support adults to have a conversation with children and young people, a suite of resources about creating and being part of a safety team, and a children's storybook 'My superhero voice' which has been translated into 10 languages.</p> <p>All campaign resources can be found on Childsafety.gov.au</p>	Launched October 2023	Attorney-General's Department
2.5 Implementing the Guidelines for the Classification of Computer Games 2023	<p>We are ensuring children's safety through new content classification guidelines for computer games and increasing public awareness through an outreach campaign.</p> <p>This work will focus on empowering parents and carers to understand the potential harms for children relating to gambling-like content in computer games.</p>	<p>The guidelines came into effect 22 September 2024</p> <p>The campaign is expected to run from late 2024 through to mid-2025</p>	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

Action	Overview	Timeframe/ Milestones	Lead Australian Government Department
2.6 Review of the Online Safety Act	An independent review of the Online Safety Act was completed in October 2024. The review's terms of reference include consideration of whether additional measures are required to ensure that online services act in the best interests of the child, and whether online services should have a duty of care towards users in Australia. The Government is considering the outcomes of the review.	The review was completed on 31 October 2024	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
2.7 Extending support for culturally safe, continuity midwifery for First Nations mothers and babies	We will continue existing investment in First Nations led, culturally safe, continuity of midwifery care for First Nations mothers, babies and their families, in order to maintain and accelerate progress against Closing the Gap Outcome 2 (healthy birthweight). This will include Birthing on Country models of care in urban, rural, remote and very remote communities.	Funded from 2021-22	Department of Health and Aged Care

Supporting parents to connect with other parents and their local community

Action	Overview	Timeframe/ Milestones	Lead Australian Government Department
2.8 Funding existing and establishing new playgroups and toy libraries	<p>We are investing in playgroups and toy libraries to provide social and parenting support for parents and carers, and access to developmentally appropriate toys.</p> <p>We have also invested \$2.1 million over 2 years for the First Nations Playgroup pilot. The pilot provides funding to ACCOs to provide accessible and affordable spaces, resources and opportunities for First Nations children to play together and for parents and carers to seek social and parenting support.</p> <p>This pilot program aligns with Priority Reform 2 under Closing the Gap.</p>	Funded until June 2026	Department of Social Services

Making supports and services responsive and inclusive to children and their parents

Action	Overview	Timeframe/ Milestones	Lead Australian Government Department
2.9 Foundational Supports for children, families, carers and kin	Governments are working together to consult on Foundational Supports for children with developmental delay and/ or disability, and their families, carers and kin. Foundational Supports are additional supports to mainstream services and the NDIS.	Foundational Supports will be phased in gradually from late 2025, and will build over time	Department of Social Services
2.10 Amendments to the Family Law Act	<p>We have made changes to the Family Law Act that focus on the best interests of children in determining parenting orders for separating couples and improving information sharing.</p> <p>These changes include an enhanced focus on the safety of children and seek to promote parenting arrangements that are tailored to the individual needs of each child.</p> <p>They also include enhancing information sharing about family violence, child abuse and neglect risks from state and territory police, firearms and child protection agencies to the family law courts. These arrangements were recently considered by National Cabinet, where First Ministers agreed to commit to enhancing and extending information sharing between the family law, family violence and child protection systems until 30 June 2028.</p>	From 6 May 2024	Attorney-General's Department
2.11 Enhancements to the Family Relationships Services Program	<p>The Family Relationships Services Program (FRSP) aims to improve the wellbeing of Australian families, particularly families with children, who are at risk of separating, or who have separated.</p> <p>We have provided \$6.8 million over two years from 2025-2026 to expand the Supporting Children After Separation Program (SCASP), within the FRSP, to provide specialised, longer-term support for children of separated families who are already engaged in counselling support within SCASP.</p> <p>On 11 September 2024, the Final Report of the review of the FRSP was released. The review offers key insights and recommendations aimed at shaping the future of the program, which supports separating and separated families, particularly those with children, in resolving disputes outside the court system while prioritising the best interests of the child.</p>	From 2025-26	Attorney-General's Department

Action	Overview	Timeframe/ Milestones	Lead Australian Government Department
2.12 Improving child-centric trauma-informed supports for children and young people	<p>To help break the cycle of violence, we will work with sector experts and stakeholders to identify gaps in supports for children and young people who have experienced or witnessed family, domestic or sexual violence, to inform the design and implementation of new and revised initiatives and interventions.</p> <p>This includes \$12.8 million to better equip existing specialist and community support services to respond to child sexual abuse and children displaying harmful sexual behaviours.</p> <p>This work will include a specific focus on First Nations children and young people through culturally safe consultation and expertise.</p>	Announced September 2024	Department of Social Services and Attorney- General's Department
2.13 Safe Places Emergency Accommodation	<p>Through the Safe Places Inclusion Round, we are increasing the number of emergency accommodation places across Australia for women and children experiencing family and domestic violence, and ensuring they are appropriate.</p> <p>This includes improving access for First Nations women and children, women and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, women and children with disability, and those who experience the intersection of racism, ableism and sexism.</p>	Safe Places is funded to 2026-27	Department of Social Services
2.14 Crisis and Transitional Accommodation Program	<p>The Crisis and Transitional Accommodation Program (CTAP) will provide capital works grants to increase crisis and transitional housing options for women and children experiencing family and domestic violence, and older women at risk of homelessness.</p> <p>Successful projects are expected to commence from early 2025, and must have a client-centred, trauma-informed, culturally appropriate and inclusive, child safe and accessible service delivery model.</p>	2024-25 to 2028-29	Department of Social Services

Move towards universal early childhood education and care

Action	Overview	Timeframe/ Milestones	Lead Australian Government Department
2.15 Worker Retention Payment	<p>We will provide funding to support a 15 per cent wage increase for ECEC workers over two years.</p> <p>This wage increase will be tied to a commitment from ECEC providers to limit fee increases and pass all grant funding on to workers to ensure workers can be fairly paid without the costs being passed on to families (see feature box on page 21).</p>	Over two years, from 2 December 2024 to 30 November 2026.	Department of Education
2.16 Building a universal early education and care system	<p>The Government is taking the next steps in building a universal early education and care system through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ a \$1 billion Building Early Education Fund which will see more centres built and expanded in areas of need, including in the outer suburbs and regional Australia. ▶ a 3 Day Guarantee that will replace the current Activity Test from January 2026 with guaranteed eligibility for 3 days a week of subsidised early education for children who need it. ▶ development of an Early Education Service Delivery Price to better understand the cost of delivering services around the country and underpin future reform. <p>These reforms have been informed by the Productivity Commission and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's (ACCC) work on early education.</p>	<p>From July 2025</p> <p>From January 2026</p> <p>Developing from 2025</p>	Department of Education





Priority Focus Area 3: Support and work with communities

We are committed to working differently to achieve better outcomes for children and families. This includes working in partnership with communities to ensure our policies, programs and services are flexible and respond to local priorities and needs. The Government has invested over **\$200 million in a Targeting Entrenched Disadvantage (TED) package**, which aims to disrupt intergenerational cycles of disadvantage and improve child, family and community wellbeing, changing the trajectory of young children's lives.

As part of the TED package, the Government has invested \$7.8 million to develop a **Whole of Government Framework to Support Community Change**, which aims to support greater collaboration and partnership approaches to working with communities and organisations to improve long-term social and economic outcomes.

The Framework will be applied and refined through a range of innovative approaches with communities and other stakeholders announced as part of the TED package. The broader TED package includes a **\$100 million Outcomes Fund** to support social impacting investing projects with a focus on supporting positive outcomes for children and families, the **Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children (IDAC)**, a 10-year collaboration between Government and philanthropy to improve the wellbeing of children, young people and their families, and a **\$64 million extension and enhancement of the Stronger Places, Stronger People (SPSP) initiative**, which aims to create better futures for children and families through community-led, collective impact solutions, delivered in partnership with community, services and governments.

The Government has also invested **\$19.3 million** over 5 years from 2024-25 to establish **Partnerships for Local Action and Community Empowerment (PLACE)**. PLACE is a joint

initiative with philanthropy, with 5 philanthropic partners providing matched funding over the 5 years. PLACE is a national, independent, not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting the needs and aspirations of local communities. It will focus on place-based efforts in four priority areas, including the early years. Each priority will include a dedicated First Nations focus.

Government is committed to supporting tailored local solutions, and will refine approaches through existing Commonwealth place-based initiatives to support the early years, such as Connected Beginnings and Empowered Communities.

We are also working collaboratively with all governments to ensure First Nations children are born healthy and strong, engaged in high-quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education and thrive in their early years, in line with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. This includes partnering with First Nations stakeholders, the Western Australian Government and Local Government through the **East Kimberley Place-Based Partnership** to work towards improving outcomes in the early years for Aboriginal children and families in the East Kimberley. Additionally, we are reviewing early years investment for First Nations children under **the Indigenous Advancement Strategy**, in partnership with First Nations Peaks, communities, philanthropy and governments. The review will consider how best to target and deliver funding, including alignment and coordination across services for First Nations children and families.

The Government is also investing around \$150 million a year, and ongoing, in **financial wellbeing and capability** programs that support financially vulnerable individuals, families and communities. We are providing more pre-crisis and early intervention supports as well as financial crisis response, recovery and resilience supports to help ensure children's basic needs are met, particularly in times of crisis or emergencies. The Emergency Relief, Food Relief, Financial Counselling, Financial Wellbeing Hubs and microfinance programs are mostly delivered by community organisations, and respond to the local needs of families and communities.



Action 3.3: Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children

The Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children (IDAC), an initiative under the Targeting Entrenched Disadvantage (TED) package, has been established as a commitment between Government and philanthropic partners to a long-term collaboration to improve the wellbeing of children, young people, and their families, by working with communities to reduce intergenerational disadvantage in Australia.

IDAC supports a more aligned and targeted approach by coordinating investments from philanthropy and government, while working with communities and existing organisations on a range of projects and systems reforms that place children and young people at the centre.

The second roundtable of IDAC was held on 15 November 2024, where participants agreed to a range of new initiatives and reaffirmed their commitment to engage in genuine dialogue and work together in partnership to achieve long-term, tangible change that ensures children, young people and families thrive.

Underpinned by the Working Together Agreement, partners agreed to the IDAC **Strategic Framework** (the Framework). The Framework will guide IDAC's focus on three portfolios of work: **place, early years and young people**. The Framework's strategic portfolios are aligned with key Government policy and strategic objectives that will support dialogue.

Recognising that every child deserves the opportunity to the best start to life, no matter where they are born or raised, participants agreed a **dedicated Early Years Working Group** will be established by early 2025 to facilitate this collaboration, which will be informed by existing discussions, including the Productivity Commission report A path to universal early childhood education and care.

This Working Group will collaborate on further establishing and embedding **innovative early learning models and integrated approaches to improve early childhood development**, with a focus on unserved and underserved areas and communities experiencing disadvantage. This will include a focus on First Nations led approaches, holistic early learning models, integrated services, workforce uplift, as well as full-service school models to support continuity of child development.

Partners also agreed to collaborate on approaches to **measuring outcomes for children in line with the Early Years Strategy**. This will include a co-design approach to the collection and analysis of better strengths-based, qualitative baseline data on young children's sense of belonging, identity and wellbeing.

Support local solutions to local problems

Action	Overview	Timeframe/ Milestones	Lead Australian Government Department
3.1 Whole of Government Framework to Support Community Change	<p>We are investing \$7.8 million over 2 years to develop a Whole of Government Framework to Support Community Change (the Framework). The Framework will support greater collaboration and partnership approaches to improve long-term social and economic outcomes, including in the early years.</p> <p>The Framework will build the capability of the Government and other stakeholders to support co-designed and co-developed local policies that disrupt experiences of disadvantage. It also supports outcomes-based funding approaches to deliver better solutions.</p>	Anticipated release at the end of 2024	Co-led by the Department of Social Services and the Treasury
3.2 Commonwealth Outcomes Fund	<p>A \$100 million Outcomes Fund (the Fund) has been established over 10 years for the Commonwealth to partner with states and territories to tackle disadvantage by funding social impact investing projects that deliver outcomes in communities.</p> <p>One of the 3 key focus areas under the Fund will be supporting positive outcomes for families and children to prevent cycles of intergenerational and community disadvantage, including in the early years.</p>	From 2023-24	Department of Social Services, with support from the Treasury
3.3 Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children	<p>The Government is partnering with philanthropy through the Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children (IDAC), a 10-year collaboration to improve the wellbeing of children, young people and their families by working with communities to make long-term, intergenerational change.</p> <p>IDAC promotes a new way of working to support a more aligned and targeted approach by coordinating investments from philanthropy and Government, while working with communities and existing organisations on a range of projects and system reforms that place children and young people at the centre (see feature box on page 30).</p>	From 2023-24, over 10 years	Co-led by the Department of Social Services and Treasury

Action	Overview	Timeframe/ Milestones	Lead Australian Government Department
3.4 Increased funding for the Stronger Places, Stronger People initiative	<p>We are investing \$64 million to extend and enhance the Stronger Places, Stronger People (SPSP) initiative, which is a community-led, collective impact initiative, stewarded by the Australian Government in partnership with state and territory governments and 10 communities across Australia.</p> <p>The SPSP program seeks to disrupt disadvantage in partner communities to create better futures for children and their families through locally tailored and evidence-driven solutions to local problems, in partnership with community, services and governments.</p> <p>This includes additional local solutions funding in several SPSP communities for projects aiming to improve the wellbeing of children and families, raise awareness of the supports available in communities and provide holistic, wraparound services.</p>	From 2023-24	Department of Social Services
3.5 Partnerships for Local Action and Community Empowerment (PLACE)	<p>We have invested \$19.3 million over 5 years from 2024-25 to establish Partnerships for Local Action and Community Empowerment (PLACE). PLACE is a joint initiative with philanthropy, with 5 philanthropic partners providing matched funding over the 5 years.</p> <p>PLACE is a national, independent, not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting the needs and aspirations of local communities.</p> <p>PLACE will focus on place-based efforts in four priority areas, including the early years. Each priority will include a dedicated First Nations focus.</p>	Announced October 2024	Department of Social Services

Action	Overview	Timeframe/ Milestones	Lead Australian Government Department
3.6 Increased funding for financially vulnerable people and communities	<p>We are providing more pre-crisis and early intervention supports, as well as financial crisis response, recovery and resilience supports, to help ensure the basic needs of individuals and families, including children, are met, even in times of crisis or emergencies.</p> <p>Supports include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Emergency Relief, which provides immediate financial and/or material aid (food parcels, vouchers, clothes) to people in financial crisis; ▶ Food Relief, which helps Emergency Relief organisations access a cost-effective supply of food items and/or material aid; ▶ Financial counselling and financial capability services, which help vulnerable Australians address their financial problems, make informed choices and build longer-term capability to budget, manage money and withstand future financial impacts; ▶ Financial Wellbeing Hubs (formerly Money Support Hubs) that provide integrated, co-located financial wellbeing services in local communities; and ▶ Microfinance services, which provide safe and affordable financial services and products, including no interest loans. 	Over five years, as part of new grants from 2025-26	Department of Social Services
3.7 Indigenous Advancement Strategy early years investment review	<p>We are improving the way First Nations programs are delivered under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) through a review in 2025 of IAS early years investment, which is approximately \$40 million per year.</p> <p>The review, led by the National Indigenous Australians Agency, will partner with First Nations peaks, communities and philanthropic and government stakeholders. It will consider how best to target and deliver IAS early years funding, including alignment and coordination across services for First Nations children and families. The review will align with and support the Priority Reforms under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the Priority Focus Areas under the Strategy.</p>	Review to be completed by the end of 2025	National Indigenous Australians Agency

Foster shared decision making

Action	Overview	Timeframe/ Milestones	Lead Australian Government Department
<p>3.8</p> <p>East Kimberley Place-Based Partnership</p>	<p>The East Kimberley Placed-Based Partnership has been established to provide a foundation for all parties to work together in genuine partnership to improve early years outcomes for First Nations children and families in the East Kimberley region.</p> <p>It is a place-based approach to support efforts to engage with the Western Australian Government, Local Government and local First Nations community. The Partnership is an initiative under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and has a dedicated focus on the early years, covering child health and development from preconception through to school transition.</p>	<p>Framework Agreement established 2024. Development of a Partnership Agreement is underway.</p>	<p>National Indigenous Australians Agency, Department of Social Services and Department of Education are co-signatories to the Framework Agreement</p>
<p>3.9</p> <p>Work with Empowered Communities</p>	<p>The National Indigenous Australians Agency is progressing co-design of a header Partnership Agreement with Empowered Communities (EC) to encourage broader uptake of shared decision arrangements across Government on policy, programs or services affecting First Nations people, in collaboration with EC leaders in their regions. Better outcomes for children and families is a key priority for EC communities.</p> <p>EC is an Indigenous-led, place-based initiative operating in 10 regions in Australia that enables Indigenous people to have a real say in the decisions that affect them. EC works to elevate the voices of communities in policies, programs and services, to ensure they respond to local priorities and the needs of Indigenous people.</p>	<p>To be developed by mid-2025</p>	<p>Partnership Agreement led by National Indigenous Australians Agency</p>



Priority Focus Area 4: Strengthen accountability and coordination

We are strengthening Government accountability and coordination in the early years. Through the Strategy and this Action Plan, we are taking a joined-up, integrated and holistic approach to better support the education, development and wellbeing of young children.

We are focussed on building and improving an Australian evidence base for what works in the early years and better understanding how young children and their families are faring across a range of different domains. We have developed an **Outcomes Framework** (the Framework) to measure progress against the Strategy's 8 outcomes and monitor changes in the wellbeing of young children and families over the life of the Strategy. Future work will be undertaken in 2025 to develop a **Monitoring and Evaluation Framework** for the Strategy, which will allow us to measure the progress and impact of actions and assist to evaluate the effectiveness of the Strategy.

We are continuing to implement the **\$16.4 million Life Course Data Initiative (LCDI)**, which will capture data insights to improve our understanding of how communities experience disadvantage. This will help to generate insights about how experiences in the early years may influence later life outcomes. The LCDI will also trial new ways of engaging with communities about their data needs through the establishment of two Community Data Liaison Officers to help local regions gain access to de-identified data which meets their specific needs and supports local decision making.

We are committed to better supporting people with disability to develop and lead research through the implementation of the **National Disability Research Partnership** initiative, which includes a specific focus on education and learning for children with disability. We are also

funding research into maternal and child health and the mental health and wellbeing of children through the National Health and Medical Research Council's Partnership Projects Scheme, the Medical Research Future Fund's Preventive and Public Health Research Initiative and Childhood Mental Research Plan.

We are driving better early childhood outcomes through enhanced accountability and coordination across Commonwealth portfolios. This includes commencing formal partnership agreements between the Department of Education and First Nations Peaks, and **providing ongoing partnership** funding to SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children (SNAICC), the peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Corporation (NATSIEC), the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. Partnership funding will support SNAICC and NATSIEC to continue to build trusting relationships with Government and ensure First Nations children, families and communities can participate in the co-design, delivery and evaluation of services and strategies that create positive change in the early years.

Action 4.5: Early Years Strategy Outcomes Framework



We have developed an Outcomes Framework (the Framework) to assist in measuring the wellbeing of young children and families in Australia over the life of the Strategy.

The Framework outlines how we will measure progress against the Strategy's long-term vision and goals. Designed to last for the 10-year life of the Strategy, it will allow the Government to monitor and report on trends and changes in child and family wellbeing over time, and better understand how Australia's young children and their families are faring across several interconnecting domains. This will strengthen the Government's accountability for the development and wellbeing of young children, and allow for adjustments over time.

The Framework includes several indicators for each of the Strategy's 8 outcomes, each capturing a core component of that outcome. Where feasible, the indicators include data-based measures which will be used to track changes in that indicator over time. The development of the indicators and measures was informed by consultation with data and sector experts.

This Framework is the first part of a two-stage approach to measuring progress under the Strategy. Following the release of the Framework and this Action Plan, a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework will be developed in 2025 to measure the impact of actions taken under the Strategy, including this Action Plan, against the Strategy's vision and outcomes.

Better integration, collaboration and coordination of policies, programs and services

Action	Overview	Timeframe/ Milestones	Lead Australian Government Department
4.1 First Nations Partnership Funding and Education Policy	<p>We are providing \$29.1 million to support national First Nations peak organisations, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Corporation (NATSIEC) and SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children (SNAICC) to deliver community-informed independent evidence-based advocacy and advice to government on matters affecting First Nations children and students.</p> <p>The Department of Education are also commencing formal partnerships with NATSIEC and SNAICC under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, to embed Priority Reform 1 and ensure accountability and commitment to Outcomes 3, 4 and 5.</p>	<p>Funding and Partnership agreement between Department of Education and SNAICC will be in effect from quarter 1 2025</p> <p>Funding is ongoing and the partnership agreements will align with the lifespan of Closing the Gap</p>	Department of Education
4.2 Implement and promote the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations	<p>The National Principles were designed to provide a nationally consistent approach to creating organisational cultures that foster child safety and wellbeing.</p> <p>All governments are responsible for implementing the National Principles in their state or territory. This includes managing how the National Principles are being applied and ensuring that organisations are following the National Principles.</p>	Ongoing	Attorney-General's Department
4.3 Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (ECCDPP)	<p>The ECCDPP is a key forum that brings together First Nations representatives, federal government and all state and territory Governments to make shared decisions, build the evidence base for policy reform, and deliver recommendations to facilitate a joined-up approach to improve early childhood outcomes for First Nations children and families.</p> <p>SNAICC and the Department of Education both co-chair and operate the co-secretariat of the ECCDPP.</p>	Funding to establish the ECCDPP was announced in the October 2022 Budget for an initial 3-year term to 30 June 2025	Department of Education

Action	Overview	Timeframe/ Milestones	Lead Australian Government Department
4.4 Enhanced national arrangements for sharing child safety and wellbeing information	<p>All Australian governments are working together to enhance national arrangements for sharing child safety and wellbeing information, and considering resources and technical solutions to help people navigate complex systems and instil confidence to share child safety and wellbeing information.</p> <p>This includes Working with Children Check (WWCC) National Reform Workplan projects agreed to by the Council on Federal Financial Relations, along with additional projects funded under the Care and Support Economy 2023-24 MYEFO package.</p> <p>We are investing \$3.6 million to support child safety reforms, including enhancing monitoring of WWCCs, raising awareness and understanding of child safety, and harmonisation of jurisdictional child safeguarding.</p>	Ongoing	Attorney-General's Department

Stronger data, research and evaluation

Action	Overview	Timeframe/ Milestones	Lead Australian Government Department
4.5 Early Years Strategy Outcomes Framework	<p>We are building our evidence base through the development of an Outcomes Framework for the Early Years Strategy. This is the first part of a two-stage approach to measuring progress under the Strategy.</p> <p>A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework will be developed in 2025 to measure the impact of actions, including those listed in this Action Plan, against the Strategy's vision and outcomes (see feature box on page 36).</p>	Released in December 2024 to cover the life of the Strategy	Department of Social Services
4.6 Implement the Life Course Data Initiative	<p>We are delivering the \$16.4 million Life Course Data Initiative (LCDI) to improve our understanding of how communities experience disadvantage. This will help to generate insights about how experiences in the early years may influence later life outcomes.</p> <p>The LCDI will also trial new ways of engaging with communities about their data needs through the establishment of two Community Data Liaison Officers to help local regions gain access to de-identified data which meets their specific needs and supports local decision making.</p>	From 2023-24	Australian Bureau of Statistics

Action	Overview	Timeframe/ Milestones	Lead Australian Government Department
4.7 Implement the National Disability Research Partnership (NDRP) initiative	We are committed to better supporting people with disability to develop and lead research through the implementation of the NDRP initiative. A key area of focus in the NDRP's research agenda is education and learning for children with disability, with topics including what can be done to ensure children with disability have equitable access to ECEC.	The NRDP has been funded by the Commonwealth from June 2024 to June 2026, with research activities expected to commence in early 2025	Department of Social Services
4.8 Research to improve maternal and child health	<p>We are investing \$15.8 million to support eleven Australian researchers to undertake ground-breaking research to improve health and medical outcomes for Australian mothers, children and families through the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Partnership Project scheme.</p> <p>We are also investing \$25 million of funding over 4 years from 2024-25 for the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) 2024 Infertility, Pregnancy Loss and Menopause Grant Opportunity which will support research into improved health outcomes for those undergoing fertility treatment, experiencing pregnancy loss or neonatal death, and those affected by menopause and perimenopause.</p> <p>Additionally, we are investing \$545.1 million over 10 years, from 2024-25, for the Preventive and Public Health Research Initiative. This includes \$75 million over 10 years for research to support the development and implementation of strategies and approaches for promoting the health of pregnant women, mothers, and young children, particularly in vulnerable populations.</p> <p>From its inception in 2015 to 30 September 2024, the MRFF has invested \$182 million in 98 grants with a focus on maternal and early childhood health research.</p>	<p>Over 10 years from 2024-25</p> <p>The MRFF 2024 Infertility, Pregnancy Loss and Menopause Grant Opportunity opened on 17 July 2024 and closed on 6 November 2024, with funding expected to commence from June 2025</p>	Department of Health and Aged Care

Action	Overview	Timeframe/ Milestones	Lead Australian Government Department
<p>4.9</p> <p>Understanding child and adolescent mental health</p>	<p>We are funding Curtin University to lead a national study into the mental health and wellbeing of children aged 4 to 17. This new study, known as <i>Young Minds: Our Future</i> will be used to plan and improve mental health services for children and adolescents. It will also provide benchmarks to track progress towards improved child and adolescent mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>We are also investing \$50 million over 4 years, from 2024-25, through the MRFF Childhood Mental Health Research Plan, to fund projects that improve the understanding of mental ill health, investigate ways to prevent and treat mental illness and psychological distress in children, and promote and improve children’s wellbeing. This includes \$30 million over 3 years for the MRFF 2023 Childhood Mental Health Research Grant Opportunity and a second grant opportunity will make \$20 million available from 2026.</p>	<p>The study is expected to be in the field in 2025, with first results expected to be available in 2027</p> <p>Outcomes of the MRFF 2023 Childhood Mental Health Research Grant Opportunity are expected to be finalised in quarter 4 2024</p> <p>In 2026 there is expected to be a second MRFF grant opportunity</p>	<p>Department of Health and Aged Care</p>



Appendices

Appendix A: Background on the Early Years Strategy

What is the Early Years Strategy?

Every child deserves the opportunity for the best start in life, setting a strong foundation for their future, no matter where they are born or raised.

The early years, from the antenatal period through to 5 years of age, are a critical period for influencing young children's development and setting them up to achieve good health and wellbeing outcomes across their life.

The [Early Years Strategy 2024-2034](#) (the Strategy) sets out the Australian Government's vision to best support Australia's children and their families in the early years.

It is a Strategy for every child in their early years in Australia, as well as their parents, caregivers, families, kin and the communities who support them.

It is a 10-year framework shaping how the Government will prioritise and support the wellbeing of children aged 0-5 years and deliver the best possible outcomes for them.

The Strategy articulates how the Government will prioritise and support child-centred policy development, and target investment in early years supports and services over the next decade. It also provides an overarching framework to drive and align our policy efforts and investments in the early years, and to promote enhanced cooperation and coordination of the Government's early childhood programs, policies and services.

Critically, the Strategy acknowledges the important role that parents and caregivers have in children's lives and seeks to empower them with the information and skills they need to give their children the best start in life.

The Strategy was developed based on what we know about the early years, what makes a positive difference, and what the community told us they wanted during consultations.

It is accompanied by an [Evidence Summary](#), which outlines the context and research underpinning the Strategy, as well as a [Consultation Report](#), which summarises what we heard during the consultation process to inform the Strategy.

The Strategy was released on 7 May 2024 alongside a [Progress Update](#) outlining the Government's work to date in the early years. A snapshot summary of the Strategy is included on the following page.

Strategy on a page

vision

That all children in Australia thrive in their early years. They have the opportunity to reach their full potential when nurtured by empowered and connected families who are supported by strong communities.

principles



Child- and family-centred



Strengths-based



Respect for families and communities



Equitable, inclusive and respectful of diversity



Evidence-informed

outcomes

- 1. Children are nurtured and safe**
- 2. Children are socially, emotionally, physically and mentally healthy**
- 3. Children are learning**
- 4. Children have strong identities and connections to culture**
- 5. Children have opportunities to play and imagine**
- 6. Basic needs are met**
- 7. Families are empowered, connected and supported**
- 8. Communities are strong and inclusive places for children and their parents or caregivers to live, grow, play and connect**

priority focus areas

Value the early years

- ▶ Raise awareness about why early childhood matters
- ▶ Embed the voices of children and their families

Empower parents, caregivers and families

- ▶ Empower parents, caregivers and families with skills, resources and capabilities
- ▶ Support parents to connect with other parents and their local community
- ▶ Make supports and services responsive and inclusive to children and their parents
- ▶ Move towards universal access to early childhood education and care

Support and work with communities

- ▶ Support local solutions to local problems
- ▶ Foster shared decision making

Strengthen accountability and coordination

- ▶ Better integration, collaboration and coordination of policy, programs and services
- ▶ Stronger data, research and evaluation

What are the key elements of the Strategy?

The Strategy includes 4 parts: a vision, 5 principles, 8 outcomes and 4 priority focus areas. Taken together, these set the scene for what the Strategy wants to achieve and why.

The vision is our shared, long-term ambition for all children and families in the early years. To achieve the vision, we will first need to achieve the outcomes. The outcomes reflect what success looks like in the early years and what is required for children to thrive.

The priority focus areas identify where the Government will direct its efforts to achieve the Strategy's vision and outcomes. The actions included in this Action Plan are categorised according to the Strategy's four priority focus areas.

The principles guide how the Government will work over the next decade to achieve the Strategy's vision and outcomes. In particular, they will guide how the Government delivers the Strategy through the action plans and outcomes framework.

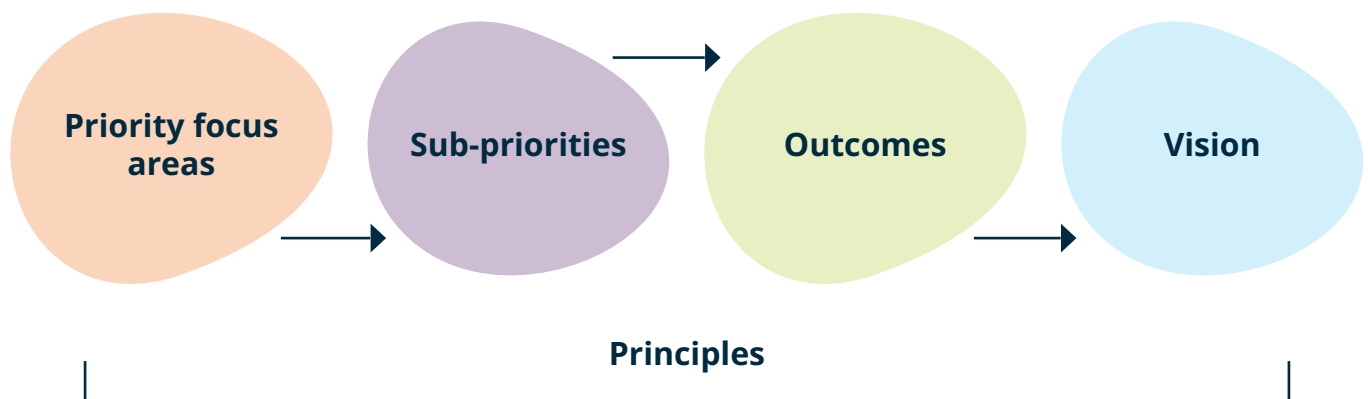


Figure 4: Key elements of the Strategy

How will the Strategy be delivered?

The Strategy will be delivered through 3 action plans over 10 years. This First Action Plan will start in 2024 and covers the period from 2024 to 2027. The Second Action Plan is expected to cover the period from 2027 to 2030, while the Third Action Plan is expected cover the period from 2030 to 2034.

The action plans outline the practical steps the Government is taking in line with the Strategy's principles and priority focus areas to deliver good results for children in Australia, contributing towards the Strategy's vision and outcomes. This Action plan builds on the significant work and investments the Government has already taken to improve outcomes for children in Australia, while also capturing new actions across Government that will deliver meaningful results for young children and their families in the early years.

This approach will allow us to be agile and responsive to contemporary challenges and opportunities as they emerge over the next decade, while still retaining an enduring focus on the overarching vision of the Strategy. The action plans will capture progress and actions arising

from interconnected major reviews and reform activities across the early years system in areas such as health, early childhood education and care, disability and family support.

While the Strategy and this Action Plan focus on the Australian Government’s investments in the early years, achieving our vision requires a collective effort. Across all levels of government – state, territory, local and Commonwealth – the early years system, early years workforce, philanthropic sector, communities and families, we all have a role to play in creating positive change and making sure children thrive.

We have also developed an Outcomes Framework (the Framework) to measure our progress over the life of the Strategy. The Framework will help us monitor and report on trends and changes in child and family wellbeing over time, and better understand how Australia’s children and their families are faring across several different domains. The Framework will enable holistic, strengths-based monitoring and reporting on child and family wellbeing over the 10-year life of the Strategy.

We will also develop a more detailed Monitoring and Evaluation Framework in 2025 to measure and evaluate the progress and impact of actions towards the Strategy’s vision and outcomes. The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework will also be used to inform subsequent action plans and contribute to future evaluation of the Strategy.



Figure 5: Strategy implementation overview

Appendix B: How will the Strategy support change?

The Strategy provides a shared vision and direction for change over the next decade. It provides an overarching framework to guide how the Government will prioritise and support child-centred policy development, and target investment in early years supports and services over the next 10 years.

For change to occur under the Strategy, all levels of government and other actors in the early years system will be required to work together to support children, families and communities. This is a key assumption underpinning the Strategy. Other assumptions, including those related to family and community factors, will also be taken into consideration.

The **principles** will guide how the Government will work to achieve the Strategy vision and outcomes, including through the priority focus areas, action plans and outcomes framework.

Four **priority focus areas** have been identified for Government action to facilitate change across the eight outcomes in the Strategy. If efforts are directed towards these priority focus areas, and all parties are working effectively and pulling in the same direction, we envisage that progress against the outcomes will be made.

The priority focus areas guide the **actions** taken by Government to achieve the outcomes, including the actions in this Action Plan.

The **intermediate outcomes** are the interim changes that are expected as a result of the Strategy's actions being implemented. These changes provide the desired building blocks to achieve the outcomes. They provide tangible evidence of progress to allow for intermediate assessment of progress over the life of the Strategy.

The **outcomes** are the goals that need to be achieved in order to achieve the Strategy's vision. They will be used to measure how children and their families are faring and how well children are growing and developing. Progress in achieving the intermediate outcomes is a key component to achieving the outcomes. However, by their nature, the outcomes (which are long-term) will more likely be affected by other factors, including those not within the direct control of the Government (including individual, social, community and cultural factors).

Regular **monitoring and evaluation** of the actions and outputs will support an assessment of whether they are contributing to improving the outcomes as intended. This will enable course correction and allow for adjustments to be made to the actions if needed. Further, understanding the broader context within which the outcomes sit is critical to understanding other factors that may be impacting progress towards achieving the outcomes.

The Strategy also identifies **how** we will know when our vision for the early has been achieved:

- ▶ all families have access to high-quality, affordable and integrated services for maternal and child health, parenting support and the early years
- ▶ services provide families and communities with the knowledge and support needed to keep children safe
- ▶ there are services available to respond to family need, including home visits and outreach services, that are informed and guided by the needs of the community
- ▶ policies, programs and services are culturally safe and delivered by a culturally competent workforce so that everyone feels welcomed and supported
- ▶ there are prevention and safety supports for children and their families that are broadly available and can be accessed before a crisis occurs

- ▶ there is equitable access across the country to services to support children with possible developmental delays, including timely Foundational Supports to address concerns early
- ▶ the early years system is supported by a highly skilled, capable and supported workforce, which is also focused on supporting children’s holistic development and wellbeing
- ▶ children and their families feel connected to each other and welcome in their communities
- ▶ there are appropriate and longstanding governance arrangements in place that facilitate cohesive and coordinated funding and the delivery of services and supports to families.



Early Years Strategy logic

Vision

That all children in Australia thrive in their early years. They have the opportunity to reach their full potential when nurtured by empowered and connected families who are supported by strong communities.

Priority focus areas

1. Value the early years

2. Empower parents, caregivers and families

3. Support and work with communities

4. Strengthen accountability and coordination

Actions

- Raise awareness about the importance of early childhood
- Highlight the importance of brain development in the early years
- Consult with children and families about what they need
- Include the views of children and families in policies and programs
- Support parents and caregivers to seek help and access resources
- Ensure supports are culturally responsive for First Nations families
- Help families connect with other families and learn from each other
- Make communities safe and inclusive spaces for all families
- Continue work with states and territories on Foundational Supports
- Advance work under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap
- Take steps to build a universal ECEC system
- Support increased pay and conditions for the ECEC workforce
- Use and share data and evidence about localised initiatives
- Explore flexible funding models, including funding by outcomes
- Support shared decision making with children at the centre
- Foster shared decision making with the Australian Government
- Align monitoring on early years investments across Government
- Enhance early years data collection nationally and locally
- Coordinate and integrate early years policies and programs
- Build the evidence base about what works in the early years

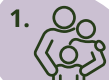
Intermediate outcomes

- Raised awareness about why early childhood matters
- Voices of children and their families are embedded
- Parents, caregivers and families have skills, resources and capabilities
- Parents can connect with other parents and their local community
- Supports and services are responsive and inclusive to children and their parents
- There is universal ECEC which is simple, affordable and accessible for every family
- Local solutions to local problems are supported
- Shared decision making with communities is fostered
- Policy, programs and services are better integrated and coordinated
- Data, research and evaluation is strengthened

Outcomes

-  **Children are nurtured and safe**
-  **Children are healthy**
-  **Children are learning**
-  **Children have strong identities and connections to culture**
-  **Children play and imagine**
-  **Basic needs are met**
-  **Families are empowered**
-  **Communities are strong and inclusive**

Principles



1. Child and family-centred



2. Strengths-based



3. Respect for families and communities



4. Equitable, inclusive and respectful of diversity



5. Evidence informed

Appendix C: Glossary of key terms

Term	Definition
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector	<p>Community-controlled organisations deliver services that strengthen and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and people and are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ incorporated under relevant legislation and not-for-profit ▶ controlled and operated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people ▶ connected to the community, or communities, in which they deliver services ▶ governed by a majority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governing body (at least 51%)
Antenatal	The antenatal period covers the time from conception until birth (alternative terms are 'prenatal' and 'pre-birth').
Antenatal care	Antenatal care is a planned visit between a pregnant woman and a midwife or doctor to assess and improve the wellbeing of the mother and baby throughout pregnancy. It does not include visits where the sole purpose is to confirm the pregnancy.
Community-led	A community-led approach means a policy or program is supported, developed, delivered and evaluated by, and codesigned with, the community or group that will be impacted by the policy or program.
Cultural safety	Cultural safety is the positive recognition and celebration of cultures. It is more than just the absence of racism or discrimination and more than 'cultural awareness' and 'cultural sensitivity'. It empowers people and enables them to contribute and feel safe to be themselves.
Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)	ECEC refers to the holistic development of a child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical abilities in a way that meets each child's needs, to build a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing. ECEC settings include centre-based day care, occasional care, family day care, multipurpose Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's services, preschools and kindergartens, playgroups, creches, early intervention settings and similar services.
Early years	Within the Strategy, references to the 'early years' refer to the period from pre-birth until 5 years of age.
Equity	Equity is about all children and families being able to achieve equal outcomes – no matter their starting point. Equity recognises that all children come from different backgrounds and live in different environments, and this means that sometimes they need different supports to achieve the same goals.
Inclusive	Being inclusive involves taking into account all children's – and their families' – social, cultural and linguistic diversity (including learning styles, abilities, disabilities, gender, sexual identity, family circumstances and geographic location) in decision making processes.

Term	Definition
Kinship	<p>Traditional social structures of First Nations families and communities are based around kinship relations which reflect a complex and dynamic system that is not captured by Anglo-Celtic definitions of family. Kinship and the terms used to denote a particular relationship between two people are inextricably linked to concepts of belonging and connection to and being on Country. This includes clear roles and responsibilities regulating any given relation. Children may have many mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters who aren't necessarily related by blood, region, clan, skin or language group. However, their responsibilities vis-à-vis any of those classificatory relatives are clearly defined and expectations can and will be enforced. Kinship systems– that is who to call what, who can talk to who, who can marry who, and the roles/expectations inherent to that, vary vastly across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia. However, especially in remote areas, households may be far more complex and fluid in their composition than Western concepts of core families, with overlapping kinship networks and adults and children moving between households.</p> <p>For First Nations children and their caregivers and kin, connection to kinship networks is important for growing up strong. This also means that to understand whether First Nations children's families are empowered, connected, and supported, we need to look further than their immediate household or 'primary' caregivers.</p>
LGBTIQ+	Refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, asexual, and others.
Perinatal	The perinatal period covers the time immediately before and after birth (from 20-29 weeks of gestation to 1-4 weeks after birth).
Shared decision making	Shared decision making means that First Nations organisations are equal partners with government. In line with Closing the Gap, shared decision making allows for transparency, with both parties receiving the same amount of information and having adequate time to review and understand the implications of decisions. It allows First Nations peoples to have their voices heard, including Elders, young people, women and First Nations people with a disability.
Vulnerable and disadvantaged	Disadvantage refers to a child or family who experience(s) an unusually difficult condition or circumstance. Vulnerability refers to a child or family who is susceptible to harm.
Wellbeing	Wellbeing can be thought of as a child or young person having everything they need to thrive and reach their full potential. It encompasses all areas of a child's life, which are linked and interdependent.



