

# SAFE & SUPPORTED

THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR  
PROTECTING AUSTRALIA'S CHILDREN  
2021 - 2031

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER  
FIRST ACTION PLAN 2023-2026







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FIRST ACTION PLAN 2023-2026



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Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023-2026 under Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031

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Children's Strategy

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# Contents

Foreword from Community Services Ministers	vi
Foreword from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group	vii
Statement from the National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing	ix
Seeking support	x
Introduction	1
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Theory of Change	9
What will we achieve?	15
<b>Actions and Activities</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Action 1 – Delegated Authority:</b> Commit to progressive systems transformation that has First Nations self-determination at its centre.	22
<b>Action 2 – Investing in the Community-Controlled Sector:</b> Shift towards adequate and coordinated funding of early, targeted and culturally safe supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.	25
<b>Action 3 – Data Sovereignty:</b> Build Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infrastructure for sovereignty of data and improve the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander evidence base.	29
<b>Action 4 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce:</b> Develop a national approach to continue building a sustainable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family sector workforce.	33
<b>Action 5 – Active Efforts:</b> Implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle to the standard of active efforts.	36
<b>Action 6 – Legal Supports:</b> Improve availability and quality of legal support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families engaged with child protection systems.	39
<b>Action 7 – Advocating for Accountability and Oversight:</b> Establish and strengthen advocacy through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioners.	42
<b>Action 8 – Social Determinants of Child Safety and Wellbeing:</b> Work across portfolios impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.	45
<b>Oversight and Accountability</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Governance</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>57</b>
Appendix A: National Initiatives	58
Appendix B: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Story of Change	61
Appendix C: Consultation Findings	76
Appendix D: Glossary of Key Terms	78



## Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which Australians live and work, and pay respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge the strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. We acknowledge that Australian governments have been complicit in the entrenched disadvantage, intergenerational trauma and ongoing institutional racism faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must have a genuine say in the design and delivery of services that affect them for better life outcomes to be achieved. We commit to ongoing partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the design, implementation and monitoring of this Action Plan, in accordance with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

This Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan (Action Plan) was developed in partnership between Australian, state and territory governments, SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children (SNAICC), and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group (Leadership Group), with significant contributions from Families Australia and the National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing (National Coalition) Steering Group.

The Action Plan represents a shared commitment, and the word ‘we’ throughout refers to the shared voice of Australian governments, the Leadership Group and the child and family sector represented by the National Coalition.

We recognise the rich contributions of those involved in developing the Action Plan. This includes a special thanks to all of the individuals, children, families and communities who through our consultations provided their invaluable input, sharing their experiences and aspirations about what is needed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to thrive and fulfil their potential.

We would also like to thank the National Children’s Commissioner, Ms Anne Hollonds, Families Australia and the National Coalition Steering Group for their contributions to this Action Plan.



## About the Artwork

The artwork by **Jordan Lovegrove**, Ngarrindjeri, of Dreamtime Creative represents *Safe & Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031* and how all governments and the non-government sector are working together to help children, young people and families in need of support.

The journey line represents the government and non-government sector working together to improve outcomes and supports for First Nations children and families. The children are represented by the footprints. The four meeting places are the four priority groups and the four different sections depict the four focus areas. The coloured patterns show the diversity of First Nations children and families.

Jordan Lovegrove is a Ngarrindjeri Artist who grew up in Adelaide, South Australia. His family is from Raukkan, an Aboriginal community situated on the south-eastern shore of Lake Alexandrina in Narrung, 80km southeast of Adelaide. Raukkan is the home and heartland of Ngarrindjeri country. Jordan is one of the first Aboriginal artists to do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander vector art, and has perfected this skill over 10 years.

# Foreword from Community Services Ministers

**Children and young people in Australia have the right to grow up safe, connected and supported in their family, community and culture.**

*Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031* (Safe and Supported) has a vision for all children and young people in Australia to reach their full potential by growing up in safe and supportive homes, free from harm and neglect.

Australian, state and territory governments, alongside SNAICC and the Leadership Group, are proud to launch *Safe and Supported: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023–2026* (the Action Plan).

The Action Plan represents a commitment to systemic change from all Australian governments to build stronger futures for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through empowering their children, young people, families and communities. This Action Plan particularly focuses on achieving safety and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability. It also represents a commitment to take urgent action to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in child protection systems.

We would like to extend sincere thanks to SNAICC and the Leadership Group for working tirelessly to centre the experiences and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities in the Action Plan.

We have heard that governments need to make changes to transform systems and take action to work towards self-determination for First Nations Peoples, culturally safe supports, system accountability and investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

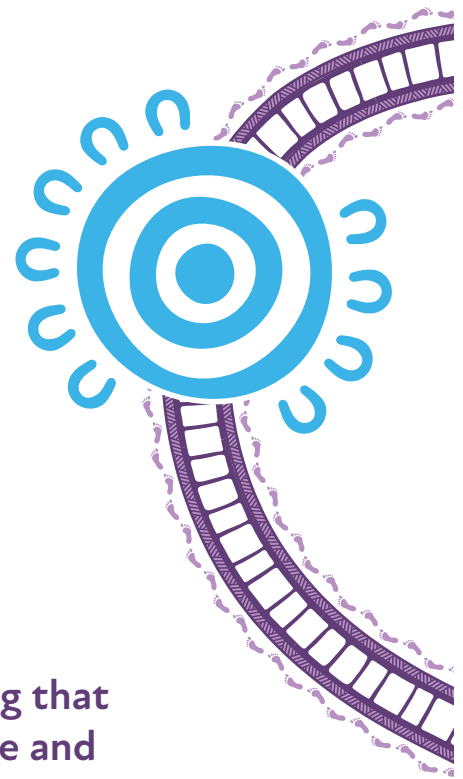
We acknowledge that the Action Plan must focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led solutions. Self-determination by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations will support effective responses on child development, safety and wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families. This is why the Action Plan focuses on key reforms such as enabling the exercise of authority in child protection by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, communities and providers; investment to grow the proportion of services delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisations; and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led data and evidence.

The actions and activities in the Action Plan will also align with and build on investments across multiple portfolios, our commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, and the actions and activities in the *Safe and Supported: First Action Plan 2023–2026* (Safe and Supported First Action Plan).

On behalf of Australian, state and territory governments, we commend this Action Plan to you, and welcome your support in implementing each action.



# Foreword from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group



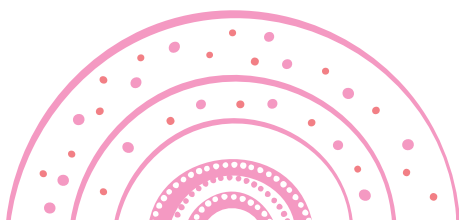
**Safe and Supported sets out a framework for ensuring that all children in Australia enjoy the right to grow up safe and connected to their family, community, and culture. Alongside the Safe and Supported First Action Plan, this Action Plan sets out a transformative action agenda to protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people from harm and enable them to thrive.**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are strong, loving and resilient. From time immemorial, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families have provided safe, nurturing environments that empower children to grow up strong and supported. Accordingly, enabling self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is critical to designing and implementing effective policies that achieve the goals of Safe and Supported.

For too long, governments have decided what works and what doesn't for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. Australian governments have implemented assimilatory policies separating children from families based on false assumptions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. This Action Plan recognises that systemic change is needed to address the legacy of colonisation and the Stolen Generations and move towards a future in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are in control of decisions made about our children and families.

The strength and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have played a critical role in developing this Action Plan. We have negotiated with governments to secure commitments to changes to child protection and family support systems that our families and communities have been calling for over a very long time. This does not mean that we were able to secure all the commitments we asked for. Nor have all governments yet followed through and accounted for their reform commitments. But we do believe that if governments work with us to invest in and implement these actions we can take vital steps forward to change the systems that continue to harm our children and that continue to pull our families and communities apart.

We all have a role to play in protecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from harm and reducing their over-representation in child protection systems. In accordance with the priority reforms in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, this Action Plan sets out a way forward for



governments to enable true shared decision-making and partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It sets out an agenda and actions to transfer authority in child protection to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations across the country, including the delegation of legislative authority. It recognises the need to support the growth of the community-controlled sector in order to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations lead the ongoing implementation and monitoring of actions.

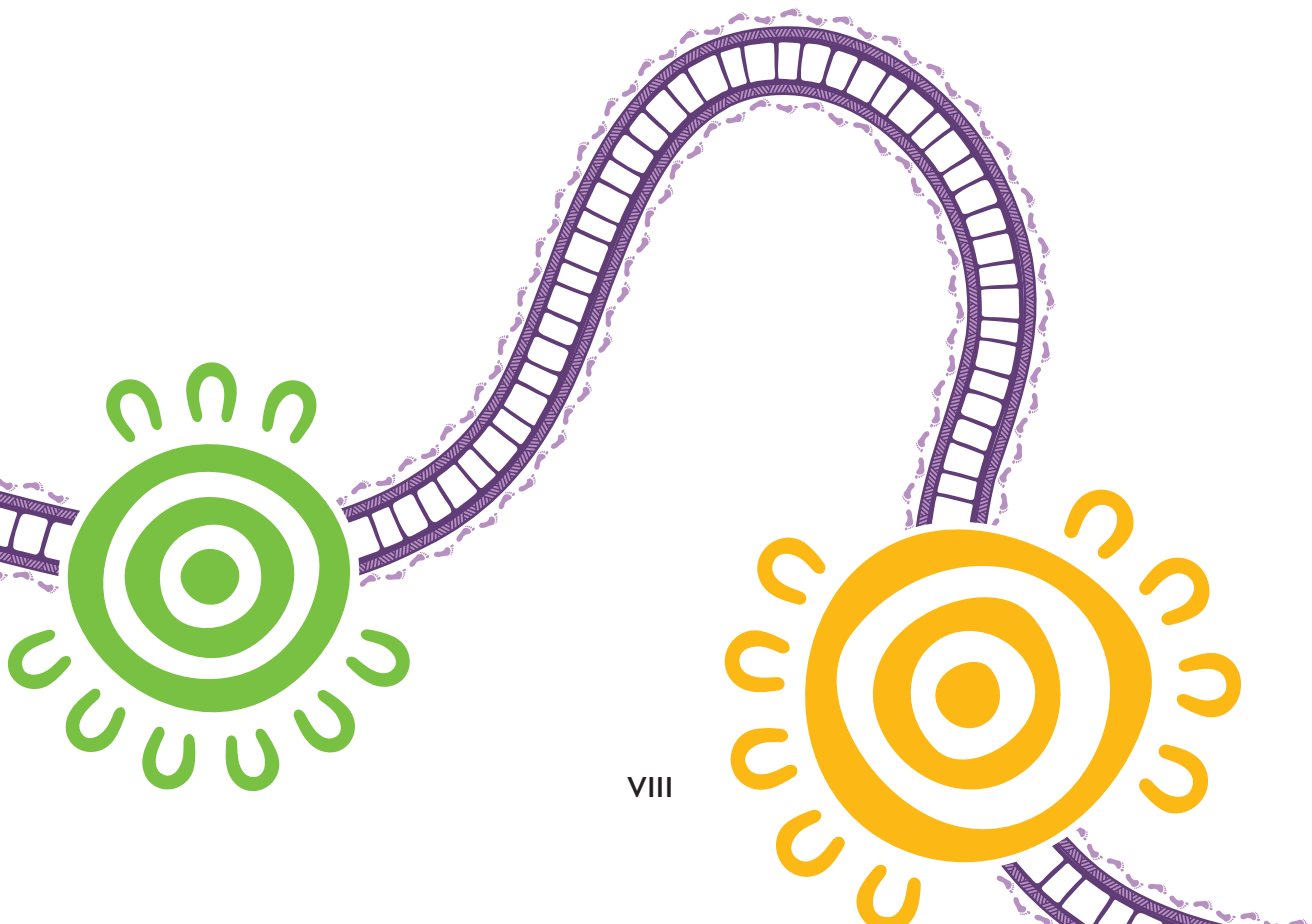
Further, this Action Plan commits governments to meaningful transformation in the way they operate, to ensure that policy design and service delivery is culturally safe and appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Finally, this Action Plan seeks to set a pathway for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations to own, collect, use and have control of data to inform decision-making and to generate an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led evidence base to drive reform. It aims to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities can tell their own stories.

For the first time, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group, independent of government, will sit at the table with Community Services Ministers to oversee a national plan for our children and make shared decisions about its implementation.

The Closing the Gap Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (Policy Partnership) will also have a major role in measuring the success of this Action Plan and driving reform priorities, enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and community representatives to exercise authority in decision-making.

This Action Plan and the Policy Partnership both envisage significant linkages across sectors to drive a holistic approach that reflects the social determinants of child and family wellbeing.

We thank the Australian, state, and territory governments and non-government contributors, including the National Coalition, for their work in developing this Action Plan. We look forward to a future where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children grow up safe, strong, and connected to their families, communities, culture and Country.





# Statement from the National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing

**For millennia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have nurtured children and young people through lore, kinship systems and the powerful cultural roles of Elders.**

As an alliance of over 200 organisations and individuals working to advance child safety in Australia, the National Coalition is delighted to see the realisation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan for Safe and Supported.

This Action Plan is a genuine step towards the self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and aims to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their organisations to lead progress and shape policy for children, young people and families.

Safe and Supported will contribute directly to the priority reforms of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (Closing the Gap), which is changing the way governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their organisations. Australia's non-government sector strongly supports the implementation of these priority reforms and is committed to its part in this transformation.

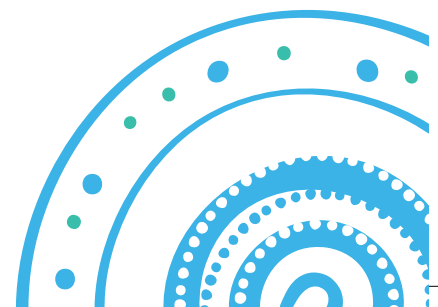
The National Coalition backs the commitments in this Action Plan that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their organisations to nurture safe and supported families, children and young people. This includes actions to grow the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisation (ACCO) sector, delegate authority in child protection decision-making to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

communities and their organisations, adopt dedicated investment strategies to lift the proportion of funding to ACCOs over time, and build workforce capacity. Additional supports and increased levels of investment will be required to assist system-wide change.

A fundamental underpinning of Safe and Supported is the full implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle. The National Coalition calls on all non-government organisations (NGOs) to work closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their organisations to embed this principle in practice and policy design.

Some aspects of this plan will be easier to achieve; others will be more complex and challenging. All parties involved in the transition period over the years ahead will need to adapt to deliver these commitments. Strong accountability and clear reporting of effort and progress – particularly against Closing the Gap targets – will keep us all on track.

Led by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group, along with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, communities and organisations across Australia, realising the full vision of this Action Plan is a collective responsibility of us all.



# Seeking support

## Crisis and suicide prevention

**If you or someone else  
is in immediate danger call  
Triple Zero (000)**

### Lifeline

13 11 14

[www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

Please refer to state and territory-specific child safety websites if you have a child protection concern.

## Mental health support and advice

### Kids Helpline

1800 551 800

[www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)

### eheadspace

1800 650 890

[www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)

### ReachOut

[www.au.reachout.com](http://www.au.reachout.com)

### Beyond Blue

1300 22 4636

[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

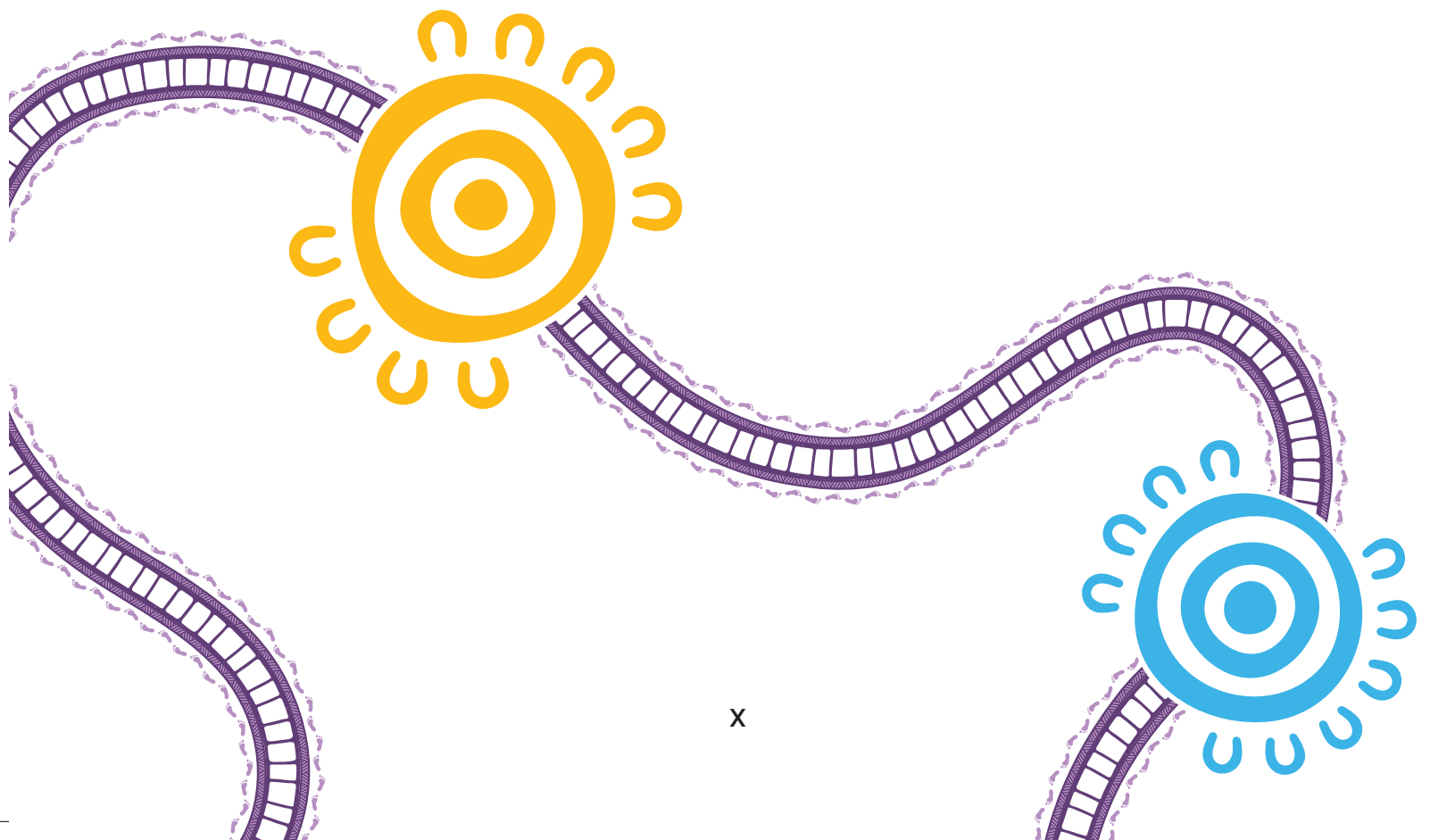
### MensLine Australia

1300 78 99 78

[www.mensline.org.au](http://www.mensline.org.au)

### Head to Health

[www.headtohealth.gov.au](http://www.headtohealth.gov.au)



## Domestic and family violence support

**1800Respect**

1800 737 732

[www.1800respect.org.au](http://www.1800respect.org.au)

If you speak a language other than English and need help understanding this document, you can contact the free Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450.

If you are deaf and/or find it hard hearing or speaking with people who use a phone, the Nation Relay Service (NRS) can help you. Please contact the NRS Helpdesk on 1800 555 660.

## Child sexual abuse support and advice

**Bravehearts Support Line**

1800 272 831

[www.bravehearts.org.au](http://www.bravehearts.org.au)

Links and contact details for support services for parents and carers are below:

**New South Wales: Parentline NSW**

1300 130 052

[www.parentline.org.au](http://www.parentline.org.au)

**Australian Capital Territory: Parentline ACT**

(02) 6287 3833

[www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au)

**Northern Territory: FACES Family Support Line**

1800 999 900

<https://tfhc.nt.gov.au>

**Queensland: Parentline Queensland and Northern Territory**

1300 301 300

[www.parentline.com.au](http://www.parentline.com.au)

**South Australia: Parent Helpline South Australia**

1300 364 100

[www.cyh.com](http://www.cyh.com)

**Tasmania: Parentline Tasmania**

1300 808 178

[www.health.tas.gov.au](http://www.health.tas.gov.au)

**Victoria: Parentline Victoria**

132 289

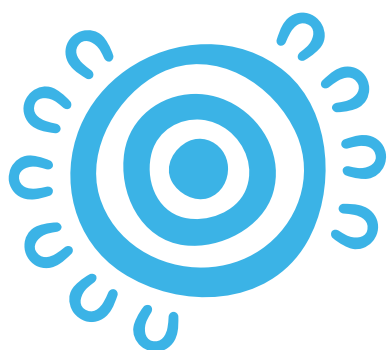
[www.services.dffh.vic.gov.au](http://www.services.dffh.vic.gov.au)

**Western Australia: Ngala Helpline**

(08) 9368 9368 (metropolitan) or

1800 111 546 (regional callers)

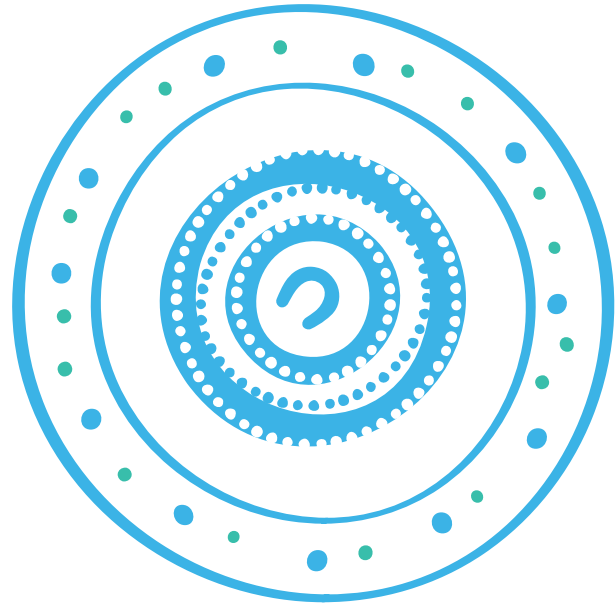
[www.ngala.com.au](http://www.ngala.com.au)



# Introduction



**Under Safe and Supported, the Australian Government, state and territory governments, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives and the non-government sector are working together towards the shared goal of reducing the rate of child abuse and neglect and its intergenerational impacts.**



Safe and Supported sets out how governments and the non-government sector will work together to help children, young people and families who need support, particularly those who are experiencing disadvantage or are vulnerable to abuse or neglect.



It sets out a 10-year strategy to improve the lives of children, young people and families experiencing disadvantage or vulnerable to abuse and neglect. It will drive change

through collective effort across governments and sectors that impact the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

Safe and Supported is for all Australian children, young people and families, with a targeted focus on 4 priority groups that experience disadvantage or are vulnerable to abuse and neglect. Achieving safety and wellbeing outcomes for these families will help Safe and Supported achieve its goal. Safe and Supported will improve outcomes for these groups through actions in 4 focus areas.

Safe and Supported will be supported by 2 sets of Action Plans. The Safe and Supported: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan (Action Plan), in parallel with the Safe and Supported: First Action Plan, outlines the scope of activity from 2023 to 2026.

The Action Plan covers all aspects of Safe and Supported and sets out actions and activities to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection systems. It also responds to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (Closing the Gap) Target 12 – By 2031, reduce the rate of overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45 per cent.

  
**Nationally in 2021, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–17 years in out-of-home care was 57.6 per 1000 children in the population.**  
This is an increase from 54.2 per 1000 children in 2019.  
In comparison, in 2021, the rate of non-indigenous children aged 0–17 years in out-of-home care was **5.0 per 1000** children in the population.  


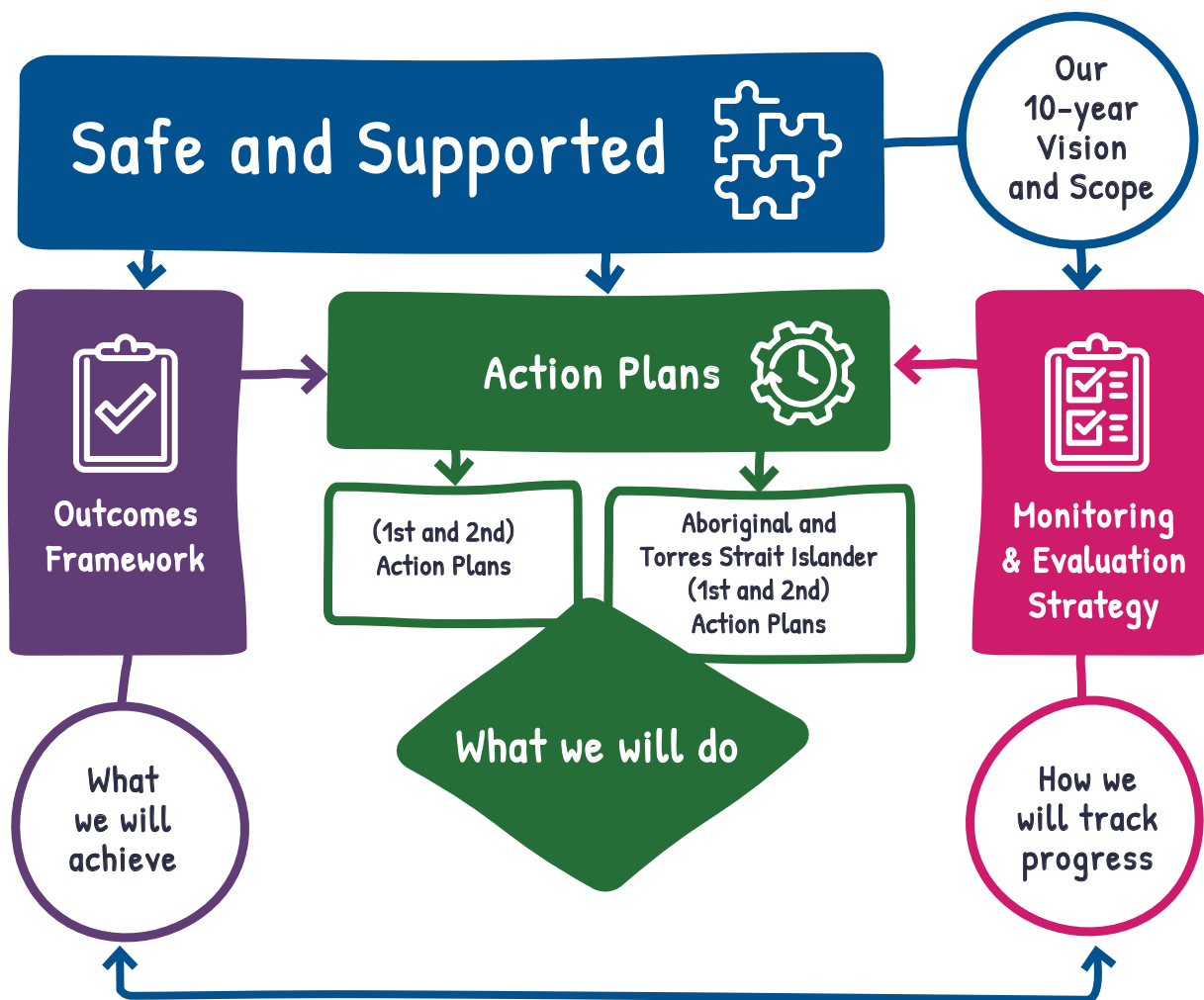
In particular, the actions and activities aim to lay the foundations for systemic change. To address the rising rate of over-representation, we will urgently implement key actions and activities. This includes establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Support.

In the first 1–2 years of the Action Plan a range of strategies, scoping exercises and plans will be delivered in partnership between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, to set out the activities and initiatives each jurisdiction must deliver to achieve our outcomes.

All jurisdictions are committed to implementing these activities in full to achieve tangible, collective action towards our shared vision and goal.

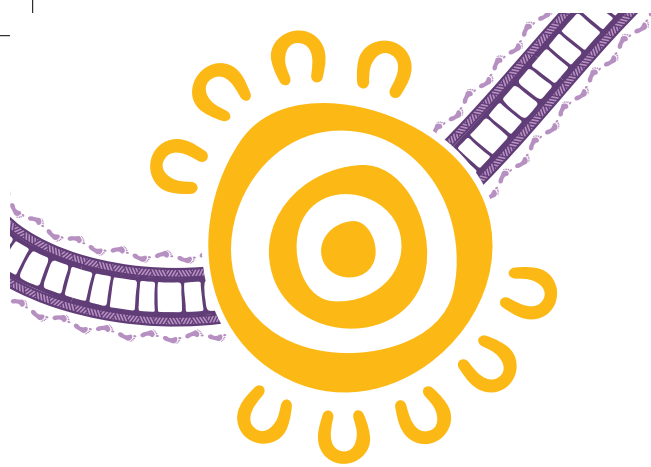
The implementation of actions and activities will be supported by a formal partnership between all Australian governments and the Leadership Group.<sup>1</sup> The Action Plan will also be guided by the underpinning principles of Safe and Supported and the priority reforms of Closing the Gap.

Figure 1: Implementing Safe and Supported



<sup>1</sup> The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group comprises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and experts in the child and family sector. Its membership includes representatives of peak bodies, leading community-controlled child and family services, academics and Commissioners for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.





## How the Action Plan was developed

The Action Plan has been developed in partnership with SNAICC, the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the Leadership Group, and state and territory governments, in close collaboration with the National Coalition Steering Group.<sup>2</sup>

The Action Plan also responds to a range of consultation findings from SNAICC, the National Children's Commissioner, Families Australia and from a public consultation process through the Department of Social Services' (DSS) Engage platform. Summaries of these reports can be found at Appendix C. Common themes include a need for earlier, holistic supports to address systemic racism within service systems and to better equip Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities with what they need to best support their children.

*'Kids who have been removed from Country for extended periods of time, they know who their tribe is what their Country is but they find it hard to reconnect within their community and Country and some of them not being recognised or ever accepted back into their community and as an Aboriginal person.'*

(National Children's Commissioner consultations, 2021)

*'[It would help keep kids safe to have] a connection to our Culture. Funding needs to be directed to help reconnect Aboriginal families to culture for the mothers/fathers and children. [We need] workers who generally care about the work they're doing and aren't there for a pay-check. Employ Aboriginal people to work with Aboriginal families.'*  
(National Children's Commissioner consultations, 2021).

*'We need to have self-determination – we need to have our own services to be empowered to make decisions for our families – we need to be diversified in our state to ensure that our lands and our cultures can be able to speak for themselves.'*

(SNAICC, 2021)

*'The aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, same as anyone's aspirations, but the big one for this base and First Nations families, it's about empowerment, about recognition of culture in every aspect of people's lives.'* (SNAICC, 2021)

An intersectional lens has been used in developing the Action Plan and in all the actions and activities. This includes considering cohorts such as children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, the LGBTIQ+ community and those living in regional and remote areas.

All actions and activities are designed to focus on the connection between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their families, culture and Country. The actions interrelate and work together to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, their families and communities.

<sup>2</sup> The National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing (National Coalition) comprises NGOs and researchers who are committed to advancing the national campaign on child safety and wellbeing in Australia. Families Australia convenes the National Coalition. The National Coalition Steering Group is the principal representative group for the National Coalition.



## Collective action for real change

The Action Plan builds on the work of the first *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020* (first National Framework). One of the key learnings from the first National Framework is that Safe and Supported cannot achieve change in isolation. In line with Closing the Gap, the Action Plan recognises that delegation of authority from governments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is at the heart of addressing over-representation.

The Action Plan recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, governments, relevant sectors and communities must work together to keep Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children safe and supported. This includes focusing on actions and activities where there is a benefit in having a national approach. It also includes all governments and relevant sectors working together in areas such as disability, early childhood education and care, health and mental health, alcohol and other drug treatment and prevention, domestic and family violence, adult and youth justice, housing and employment to holistically address the social determinants of child safety and wellbeing.

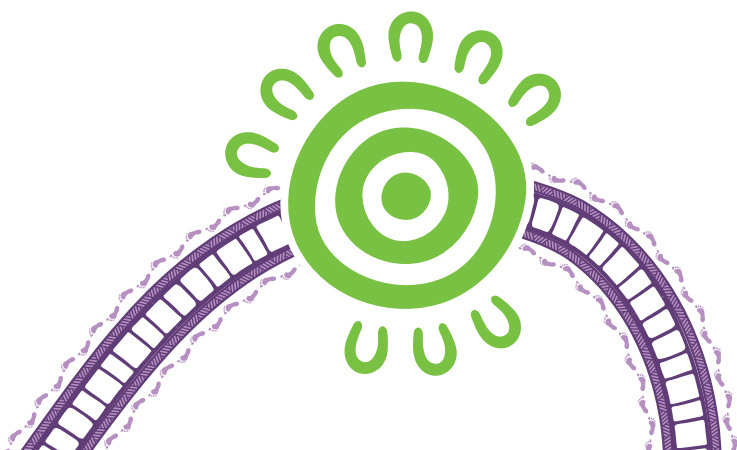
State and territory governments are responsible for managing child protection systems, but all governments have a role in driving early intervention and prevention and providing universal services for children and young people. The Action Plan will intersect with initiatives being implemented by individual jurisdictions, including the Australian Government Early Years Strategy, which will create a new integrated, holistic approach to early childhood care and support.

The Action Plan will also intersect with work under way for other national initiatives that support systemic change for children, young people and families (see Appendix A for further information). This includes:

- the *National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032*
- the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030*
- the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy*
- Closing the Gap initiatives (such as the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership and Sector Strengthening Plan, the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Policy Partnership, the Justice Policy Partnership and the Disability Sector Strengthening Plan).

The Action Plan has a specific focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families experiencing disadvantage and/or vulnerability, including where this Priority Group intersects with other Safe and Supported priority groups, such as children/young people living with disability and/or parents/carers living with disability. All actions and activities will be disability-inclusive and align with relevant initiatives. This includes the Closing the Gap Commonwealth Implementation Plan, the Closing the Gap Disability Sector Strengthening Plan and *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031*.

Finally, to ensure government accountability and transparency to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the Action Plan is underpinned by an Outcomes Framework (page 18) detailing the outcomes against which progress will be measured over the 10 years of Safe and Supported. The outcomes focus on making a difference in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities but also intersect with those of the Safe and Supported First Action Plan, which focuses on reducing rates of child abuse and neglect for all Safe and Supported priority groups.



The Action Plan is a living document, which means we can also respond to emerging evidence and issues. This includes relevant Royal Commissions such as the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect

and Exploitation of People with Disability. How we measure our progress against these outcomes will be set out in the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy.

Figure 2: Safe and Supported at a glance

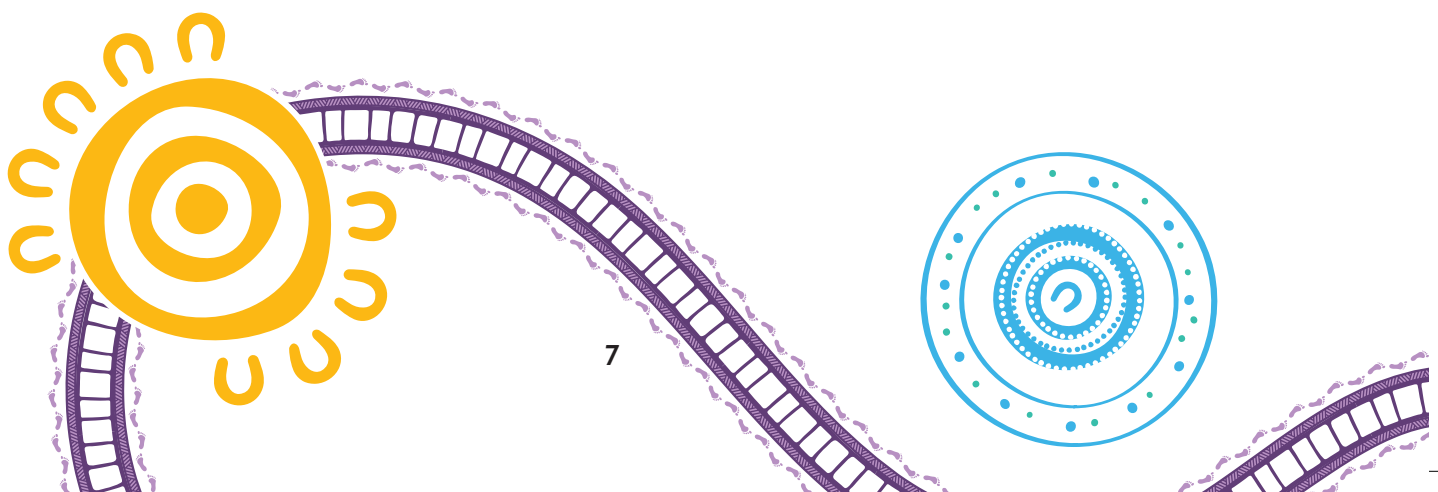


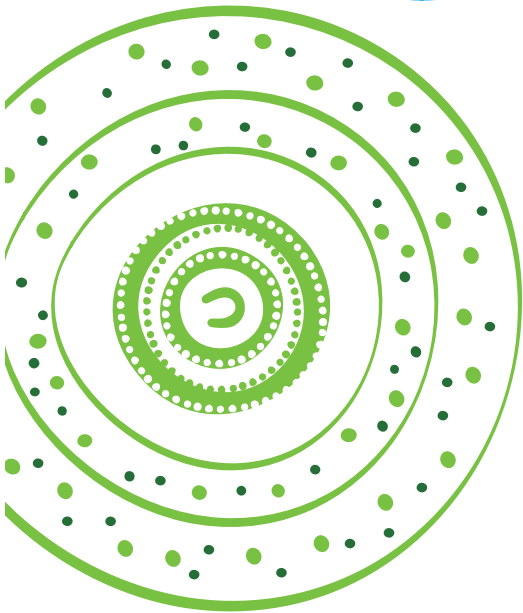
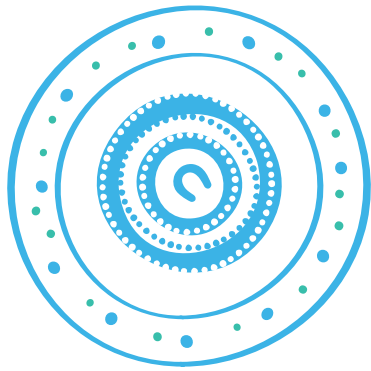
## Summary of Actions

See Safe and Supported First Action Plan for more actions.

We note that while this Action Plan spans 2023 to 2026, some actions and activities may carry over to the second Action Plan (2027 to 2031).

Action	Short Description	Focus Area
Action 1	<b>Delegated Authority</b> – Commit to progressive systems transformation that has First Nations self-determination at its centre.	2, 3
Action 2	<b>Investing in the Community-Controlled Sector</b> – Shift towards adequate and coordinated funding of early, targeted and culturally safe supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.	1, 2, 4
Action 3	<b>Data Sovereignty</b> – Build Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infrastructure for sovereignty of data and improve the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander evidence base.	2, 3
Action 4	<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce</b> – Develop a national approach to continue building a sustainable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family sector workforce.	2, 4
Action 5	<b>Active Efforts</b> – Implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) to the standard of active efforts.	1, 2, 4
Action 6	<b>Legal Supports</b> – Improve availability and quality of legal support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families engaged with child protection systems.	2, 4
Action 7	<b>Advocating for Accountability and Oversight</b> – Establish and strengthen advocacy through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioners and similar roles.	2, 3
Action 8	<b>Social Determinants of Child Safety and Wellbeing</b> – Work across portfolios impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.	1, 2, 4

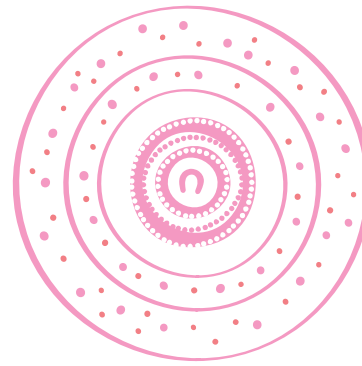




# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Theory of Change

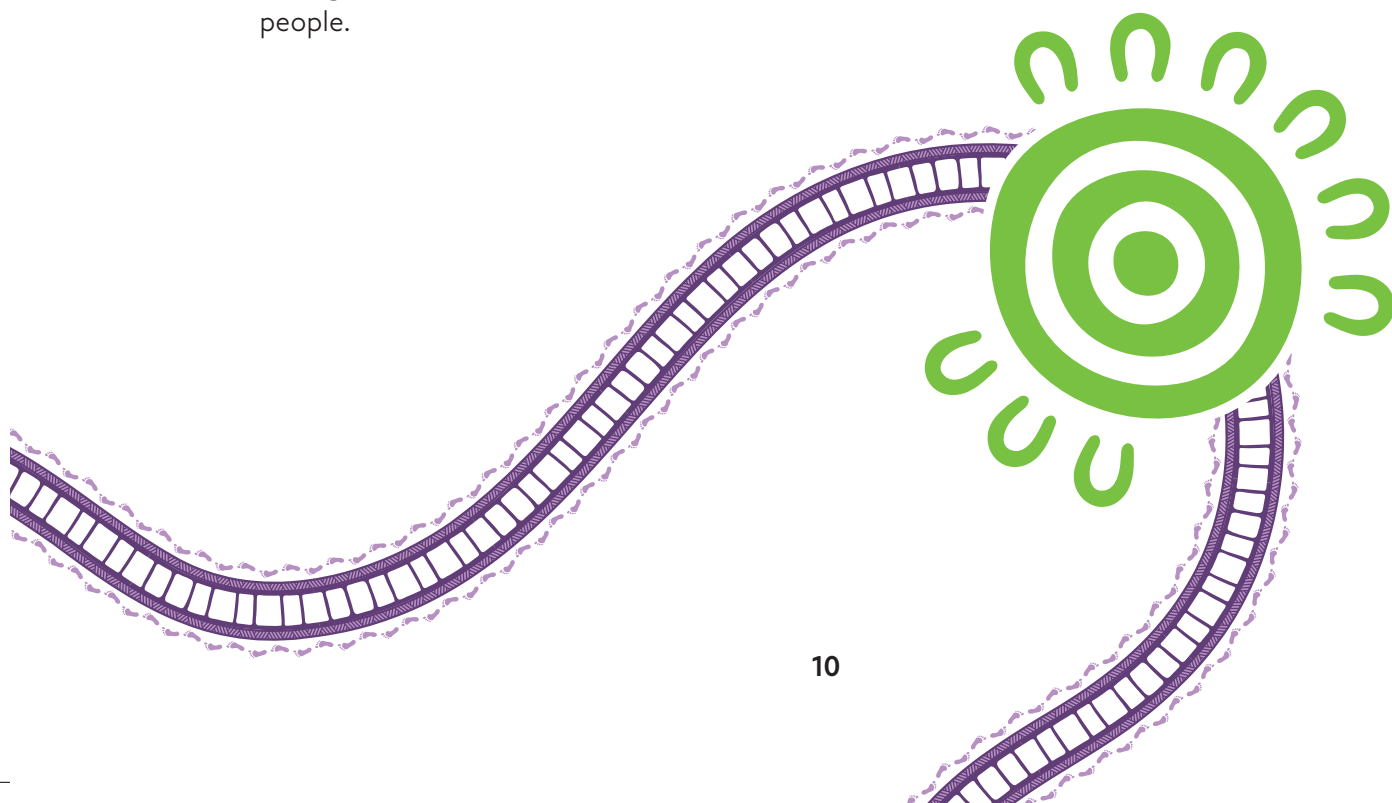


**Safe and Supported is underpinned by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Theory of Change explaining how and why we expect change to occur for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families over the next 10 years.**



The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Theory of Change outlines the following.

- The key systemic barriers to the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families that Safe and Supported is seeking to address – including the ongoing harm caused by non-Indigenous worldviews continuing to dominate decision-making regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and the destructive impact of governments’ failures to enable self-determination.
- The commitments made by all governments across Australia under Closing the Gap, which will help us tackle these barriers through system transformation and delegation of decision-making authority from governments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- The key strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, communities and organisations, which are the enablers we need in place to facilitate this transformation.
- The 4 overarching areas of work in which Safe and Supported sets out to create change through the actions.



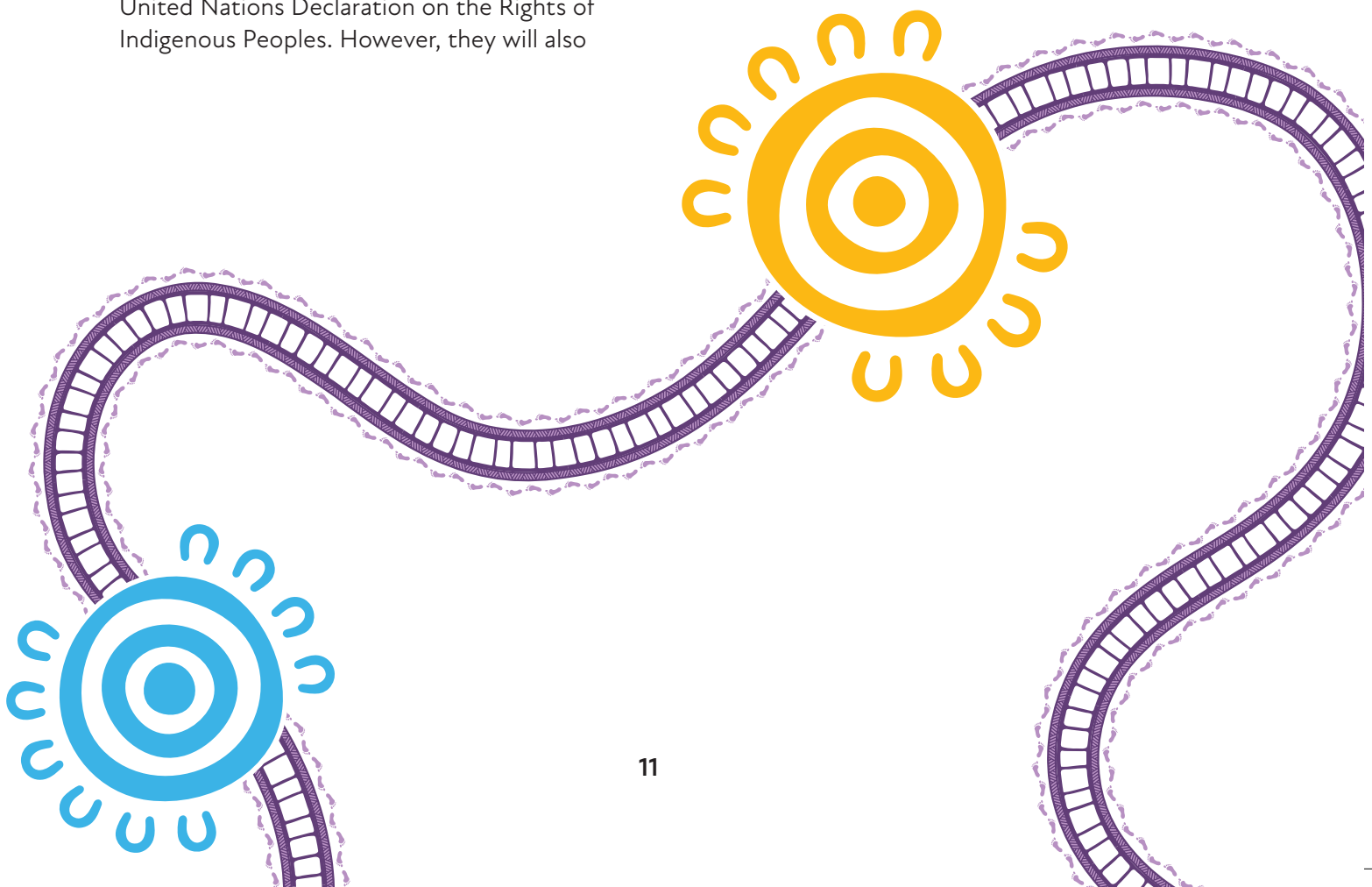
- The pathways through which we aim for the actions to lead to improvements at the level of systems and services, children and families, and whole communities.
- The ultimate changes (i.e. outcomes) Safe and Supported aims to achieve, which are described below in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outcomes Framework (see page 18).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families have a unique starting point and journey under Safe and Supported and unique rights under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. However, they will also

be impacted by the actions set out in the Safe and Supported First Action Plan.

Furthermore, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families fall into one or more of the other 3 priority groups identified in Safe and Supported.

A summary diagram of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Theory of Change can be found on page 12. The full Story of Change is at Appendix B.





# Safe & Supported: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Theory of Change



<b>STARTING POINT</b> <i>What are the issues that need to be addressed?</i>	Embedded systemic & structural racism continues to affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.	Intergenerational trauma persists – healing requires active & holistic efforts.
	Improvements are needed across <i>all</i> stages of child and family engagement with service systems: from universal service provision, to early identification of and responses to family challenges, to out-of-home care systems and children leaving care.	

**COMMITMENT**  
All levels of government have committed to reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45% by the year 2031, per Target 12 of the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*.

<b>KEY ENABLERS OF CHANGE</b>	Self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is core to improving outcomes at the system, service and family levels.	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities know what is needed to support safety and wellbeing – they must be partners in decision-making.
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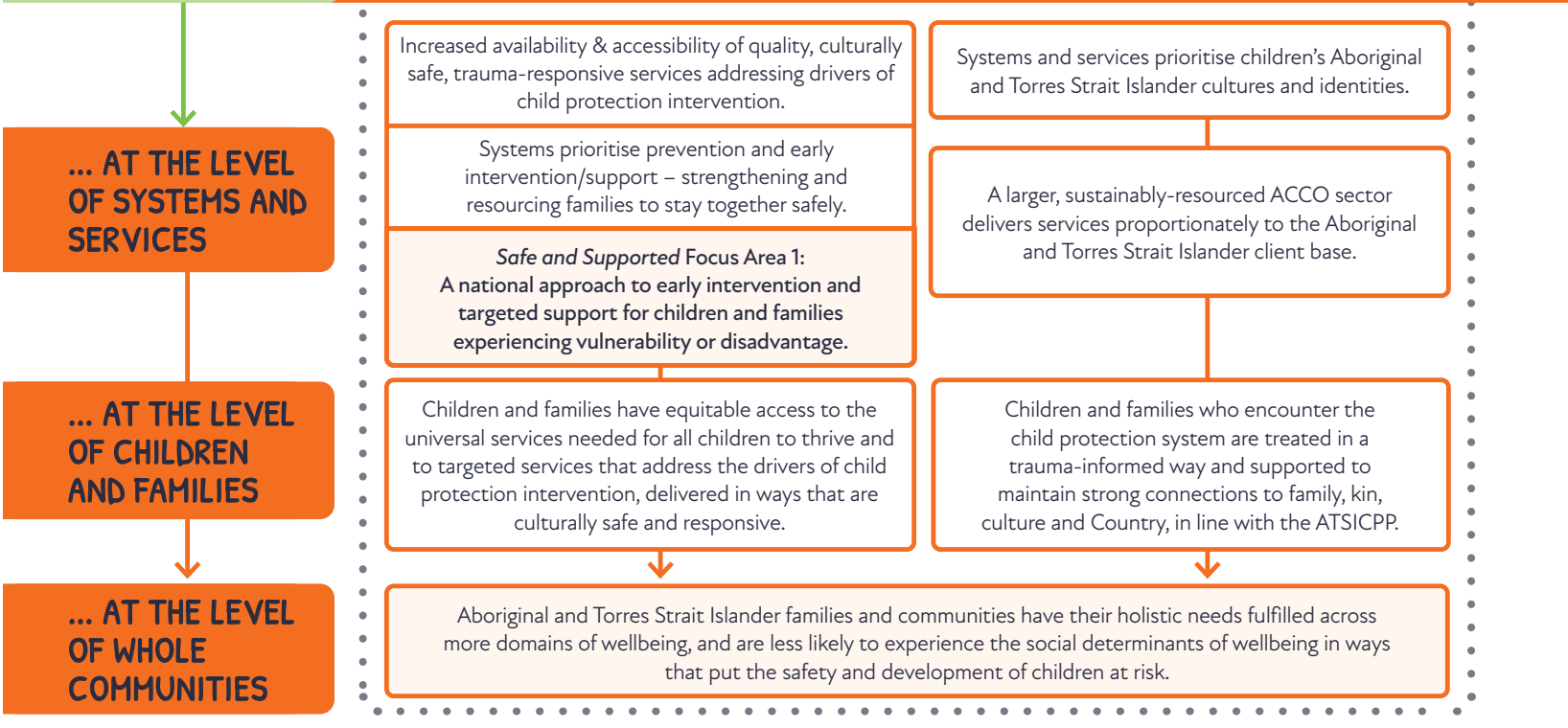
<b>AREAS OF WORK FOR PRIORITY SYSTEM REFORMS</b> <i>How do systems need to change overall for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?</i>	Improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families' access to quality, culturally safe services necessary for children to thrive.	↔	Reshape legislation, policies, programs and practices in child and family welfare to be culturally safe and responsive for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.
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**CULTURALLY SAFE AND PREVENTION-FOCUSED SYSTEMS**

Action 2: Investing in the community-controlled sector.	Action 5: Active efforts to implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.
Action 8: Social determinants of child safety and wellbeing.	Action 4: First Nations workforce.
<b>Safe and Supported Focus Area 4: Strengthening the child and family sector and workforce capability.</b>	
Action 6: Legal supports.	

**ACTIVITIES TO DRIVE CHANGE: FIRST ACTION PLAN**  
*What will stakeholders do/support/develop?*

**HOW THESE ACTIVITIES WILL HELP US ACHIEVE THE 10-YEAR OUTCOMES ...**



Reduced incidence of child abuse and neglect within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

*Safe and Supported Focus Area 2:*





Non-Indigenous people, processes and worldviews still dominate decisions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children – contrary to the right to self-determination.	Social determinants of wellbeing have detrimental effects on many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.	Systems require reorientation – away from tertiary intervention, towards early support and family preservation.
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Improvements are needed across *all* stages of child and family engagement with service systems: from universal service provision, to early identification of and responses to family challenges, to out-of-home care systems and children leaving care.

Under the Priority Reforms they have committed to establishing formal partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for shared decision-making; building the community-controlled sector; transforming government institutions by eliminating racism and improving transparency; and enabling shared access to data and information at a regional level.

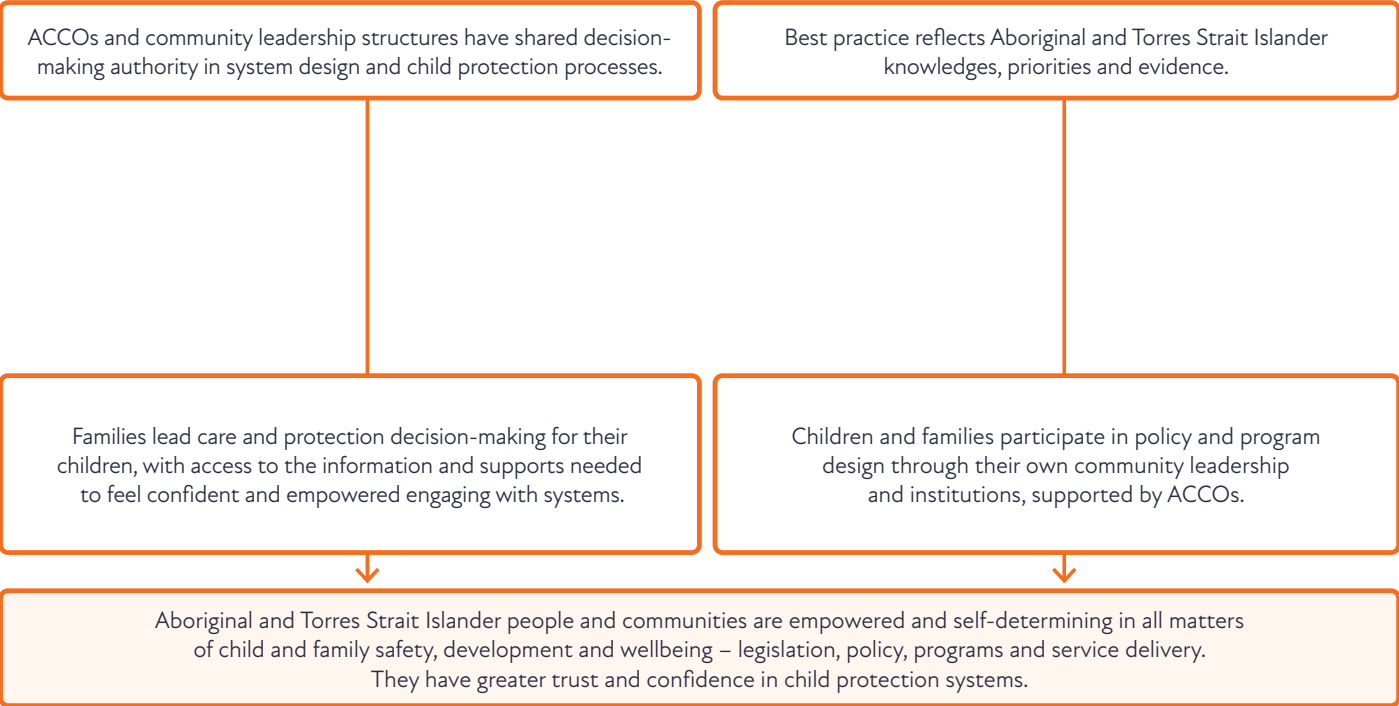
The strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and child-rearing practices are protective and underpin quality care for children.	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations achieve better results for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, and more often provide the holistic and culturally safe services that are needed to generate long-term improvements in family wellbeing.
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↔	Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities to participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children.	↔	Make child protection systems and service providers accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, communities and organisations.
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## ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP

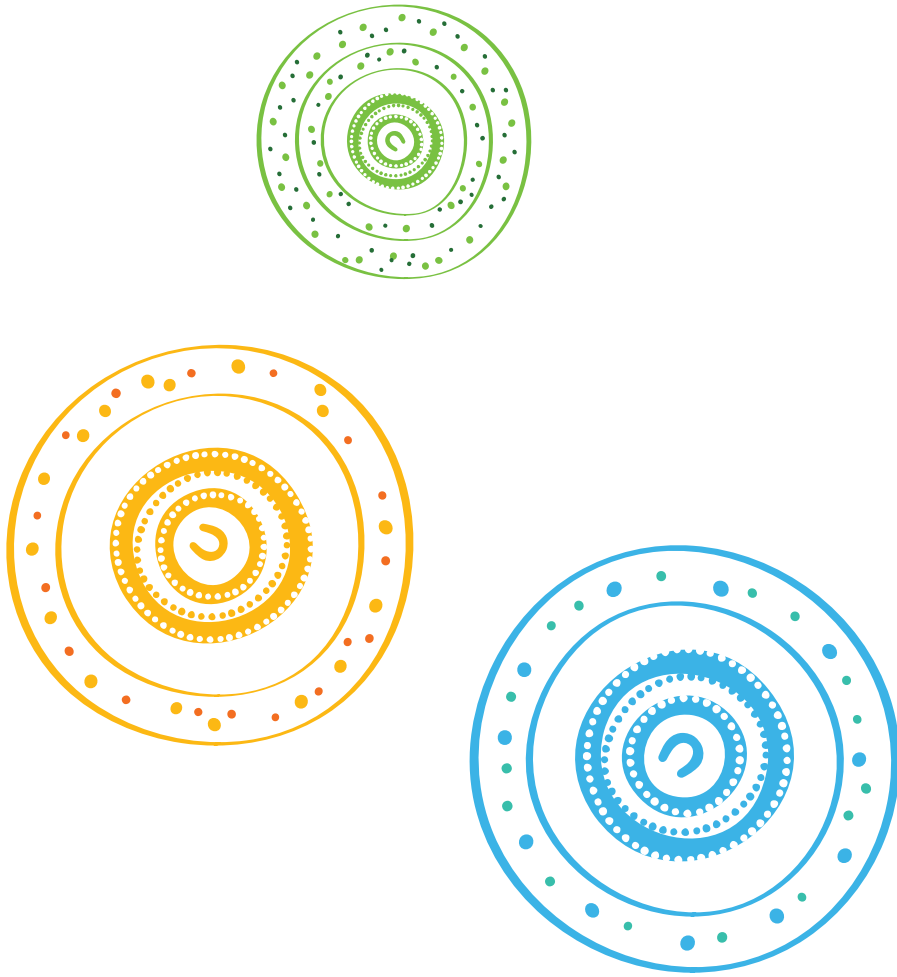
Action 1: Transfer of authority to ACCOs.	Action 7: Advocating for accountability and oversight – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioners.
Action 3: Data sovereignty <i>Safe and Supported Focus Area 3: Improved information sharing, data development and analysis.</i>	

## SEE THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK FOR THESE OUTCOMES

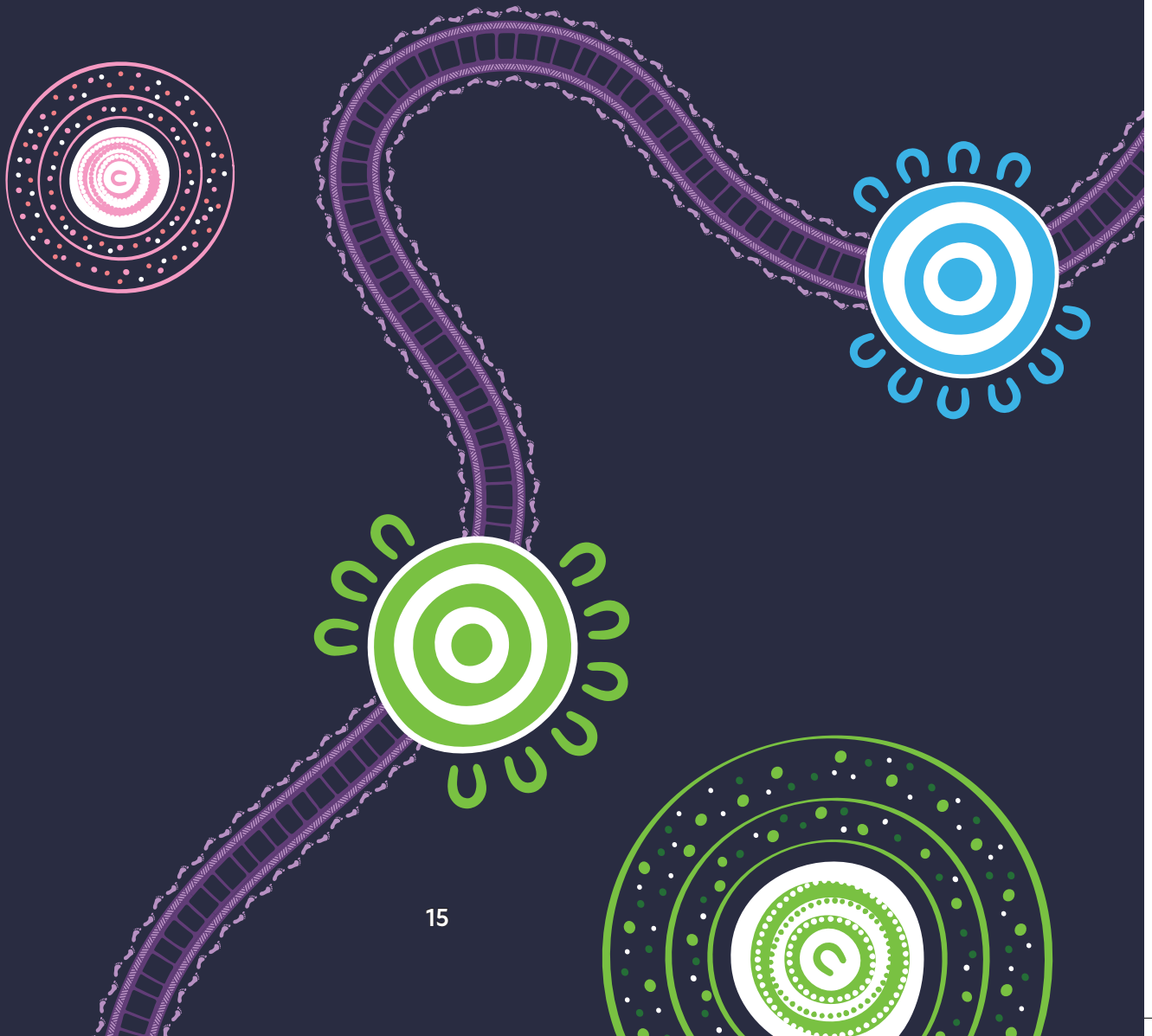


**+** Better processes and outcomes for children and families involved in child protection systems – reducing the intergenerational impact of that involvement.

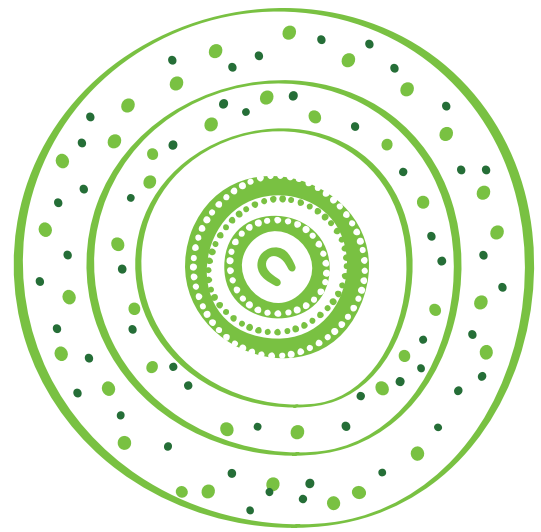
Addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection systems.



What will  
we achieve?



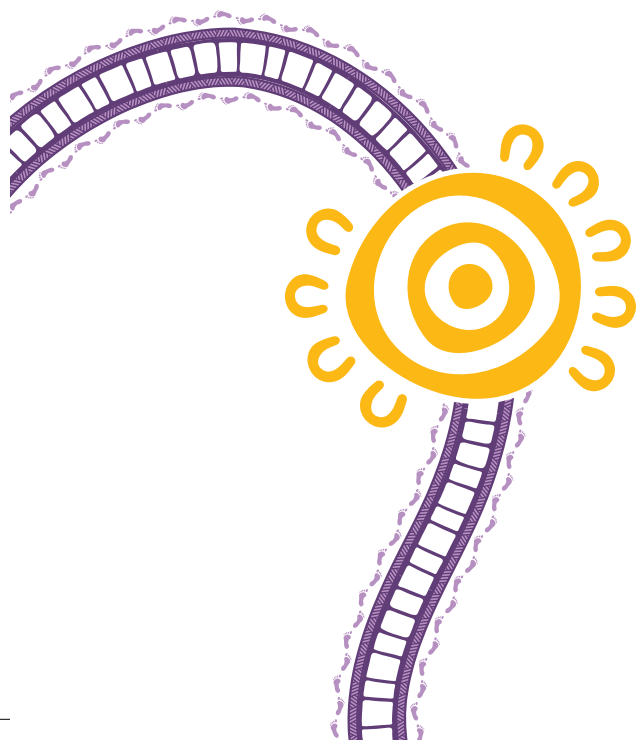
The high-level Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outcomes Framework, on page 18, outlines the outcomes Safe and Supported aims to achieve for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations over its 10-year life span. This includes changes we wish to see in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families (child and family-level outcomes), as well as changes in the design and delivery of the services and systems with which they engage (system-level outcomes).

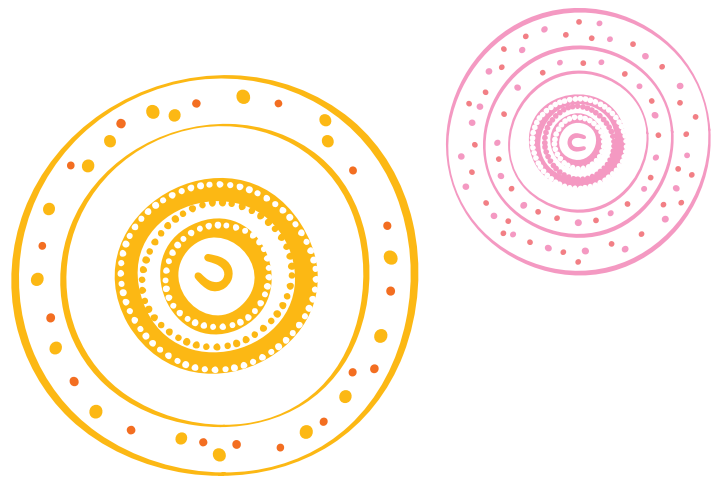


In achieving these outcomes, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will be enabled to exercise greater self-determination in child and family safety, development and wellbeing. This will be achieved through exercising decision-making authority in the design, implementation and monitoring of child protection legislation, policy, programs, practice frameworks and commissioning, consistent with the actions and activities within the agreed Action Plans and the principles of Closing the Gap. By empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families to lead the decisions that affect their lives, the Action Plan will build communities' trust and confidence in child protection systems that are transparent and accountable.

The outcomes chosen were informed by the priorities raised by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families, communities and organisations through various consultations, including the nationwide consultations undertaken by SNAICC during the initial development of Safe and Supported.

Outcomes are grouped by the same overarching areas of work laid out in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Theory of Change, although it is recognised that all 4 areas are interconnected. Each area of work includes 2 tiers of outcomes – 10-Year Outcomes at the child and family level and system level, and Suboutcomes under each that show the smaller changes needed to achieve them.



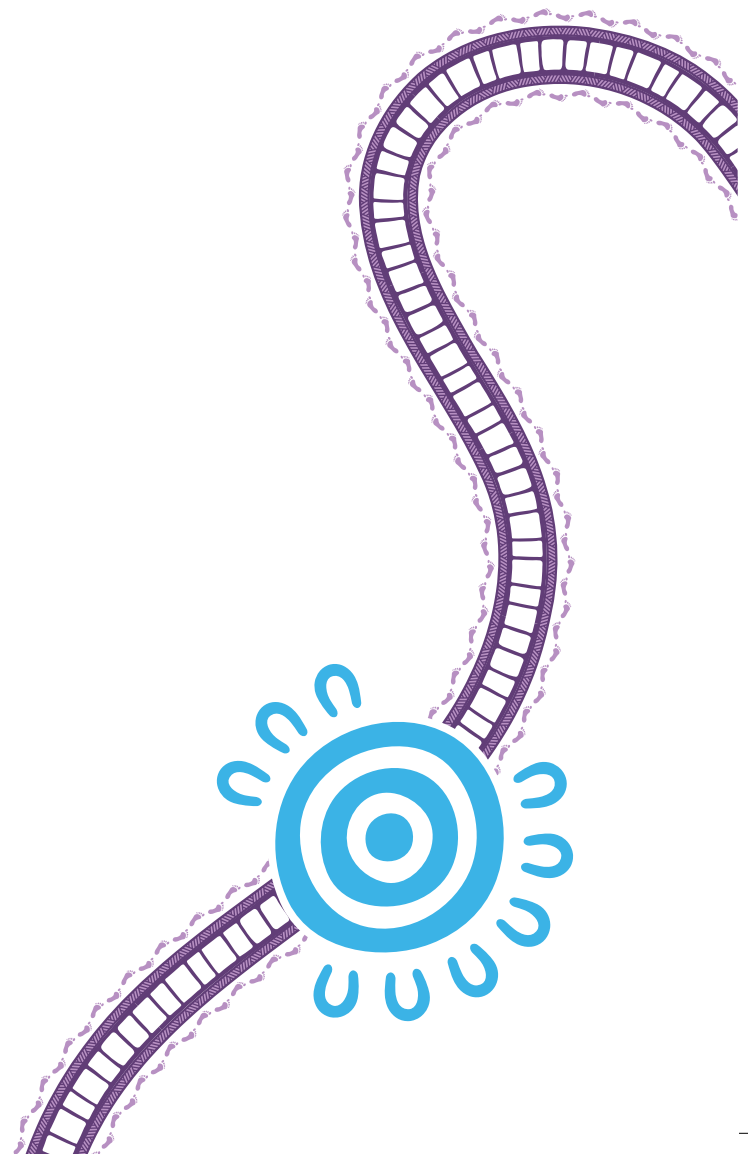


There are also several outcomes that require collaboration with areas outside the direct remit of Safe and Supported . These are called ‘interface outcomes’ and focus on addressing the social determinants of wellbeing in ways that protect the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families and support their involvement in the systemic changes needed.

As noted for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Theory of Change above, the outcomes set out in the Safe and Supported Outcomes Framework (found on page 20 of the Safe and Supported First Action Plan) will also be highly relevant to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families, communities and organisations.

Each activity under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan will contribute to achieving one or more of the outcomes in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outcomes Framework. Activities have been mapped to the relevant 10-Year Outcomes and Sub-outcomes in the ‘Actions and Activities’ section starting on page 21.

Measuring progress towards the outcomes will be important over the next 10 years. However, the outcomes are ambitious and deal with complex issues, meaning it may take time to see clear signs of change. The Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy will outline how we will measure success for all outcomes and monitor progress towards the goal of Safe and Supported (see page 54 for details).



# Safe & Supported: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outcomes Framework



## VISION

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people grow up safe and supported in their family, community and culture.

## AREAS OF WORK

## 10-YEAR OUTCOMES

### CHILD AND FAMILY-LEVEL

### SYSTEM-LEVEL

**1.** Improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families' access to quality, culturally safe services necessary for children and young people to thrive.

**SFN1(a)** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families know they can easily access the services and supports they need and that those services will be safe and respectful of their cultures, trauma-informed, child-centred and family-focused.

**SFN1(b)** High-quality child and family wellbeing services are designed and delivered by ACCOs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families, in line with families' needs, and focus on supporting families to stay safe together.

**2.** Reshaping legislation, policies, programs & practices in child and family welfare to be culturally safe and responsive for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

**SFN2(a)** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families in contact with child protection systems have their cultural needs (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child-rearing practices) and kinship networks supported. Their right to make decisions about their own lives, within their unique cultural parameters, is recognised.

**SFN2(b)** Systems and services uphold children's and young people's rights to their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities and the wellbeing needs arising from those identities, including self-determination and connection to family, community, Country and culture.

**3.** Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities to participate in and have control over decisions that affect children and young people.

**SFN3(a)** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families lead care and protection decision-making for their children (with children and young people involved in all decisions), and participate in policy and program design through their own community leadership and institutions.

**SFN3(b)** ACCOs and community leadership have authority in system design and child protection processes. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and evidence drives best practice.

**4.** Making child protection systems and service providers accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, communities and organisations.

**SFN4(a)** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families access the information and supports they need to feel confident and empowered when engaging with child and family welfare systems.

**SFN4(b)** The design, implementation and evaluation of all aspects of child protection systems are continuously overseen by robust Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-designed governance and accountability mechanisms, with governments held genuinely accountable to progress against their commitments.

## INTERFACE OUTCOMES

*Cross-portfolio action to strengthen child safety and wellbeing will form a key foundation for successfully achieving outcomes across the Areas of Work.*

## 10-YEAR OUTCOMES

**SFN5(a)** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities have their holistic needs fulfilled. As such, fewer families experience social, emotional or economic risk factors for child neglect or abuse.

## SUB-OUTCOMES

**SFN5.1** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families have improved access to better quality, more equitable, culturally safe services and supports in the following areas:

- safe and stable housing
- stable family employment, financial independence and security
- homes and communities that are free from violence and discrimination

## MEASURING OUTCOMES

There will be a strong focus on measuring progress towards the *Safe and Supported* outcomes, recognising the work different jurisdictions are doing to address child safety.

A mixed methods approach to measurement and evaluation will be used, in recognition of the complexity of the

outcomes. This approach will include quantitative trend data supported by more detailed qualitative analysis and storytelling.

The indicators will be included in the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy.





## GOAL

To reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45% by the year 2031, per Target 12 of the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*.

## SUB-OUTCOMES

- SFN1.1** ACCOs are sustainably resourced to deliver child and family services tailored for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including prevention and healing services, commensurate with need and the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* (clause 55 (a), (b) – Priority Reform Two).
- SFN1.2** The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family wellbeing workforce is expanded and sees improved retention, in line with the *Closing the Gap* Early Childhood Care and Development Sector Strengthening Plan.
- SFN1.3** The non-Indigenous child and family workforce and sector are more culturally responsive, trauma-aware and healing-informed.
- SFN1.4** Systems prioritise resourcing and strengthening families to stay safe together. Where children and young people have been removed, they and their families and communities are supported to maintain connections and achieve reunification through healing.

Culturally safe and prevention-focused systems

- SFN2.1** Governments undertake active efforts to implement all 5 elements of the ATSI CPP. All jurisdictions demonstrate transparency and accountability for their performance against the Principle, via timely reporting of high-quality data.
- SFN2.2** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples exercise self-determination by leading service design and workforce development, including through the development of culturally valid assessment and decision-making tools.
- SFN2.3** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and carers (both formal and informal) receive equitable supports to meet the holistic needs of the children and young people they care for.
- SFN2.4** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have greater confidence in child protection and family support systems.

- SFN3.1** ACCOs have ongoing roles as partners in formal structures for shared decision-making in the design, implementation and monitoring of child protection legislation, policy, programs, practice frameworks and commissioning, consistent with the actions and activities within the agreed Action Plans and the principles of the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*.
- SFN3.2** ACCOs exercise greater authority in frontline child protection processes and are sustainably resourced to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families to lead decision-making at all points of engagement with child protection systems.
- SFN3.3** Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leadership structures have the authority and infrastructure to lead the commissioning of child and family wellbeing services for their communities.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander systems leadership

- SFN4.1** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families in every jurisdiction are well-represented on a continuous basis by empowered, sustainably-resourced oversight and advocacy mechanisms, including: community-controlled child and family peak bodies, per the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* (clause 45 (c), (d) – Priority Reform Two); and independent Commissioners for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People or similar roles.
- SFN4.2** Through expanded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research leadership and community control of data, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander evidence base grows in size and influence.
- SFN4.3** The collection and analysis of child and family wellbeing data are undertaken in line with the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* (Priority Reform Four) and the principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance (led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and based on their priorities, knowledges and expertise).

## SUB-OUTCOMES

- holistic physical, social and emotional health/wellbeing, including healing services that address the impacts of trauma
- education (early childhood to tertiary) that supports parity of educational attainment with non-Indigenous children/young people
- family law systems, including culturally safe and responsive legal advice and representation
- therapeutic and restorative justice
- disability services and supports, including disability-responsive resources and options in each of the above sectors.

**SFN5.2** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families, communities and organisations participate in the design, implementation and oversight of these services and supports. This supports children and young people to grow as leaders in their community and culture.

**SFN5.3** Inter-jurisdictional and inter-departmental leadership supports improved connections and collaborations across systems, jurisdictions and policy areas.

## MEASURING OUTCOMES

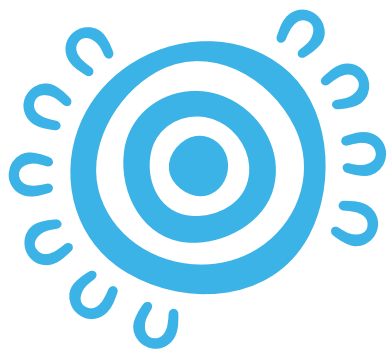
They will be chosen with regards to what we are aiming to measure and how this can best be achieved.

### Potential data sources include:

- the Child Protection National Minimum Data Set
- other national datasets relevant to child and family safety and wellbeing

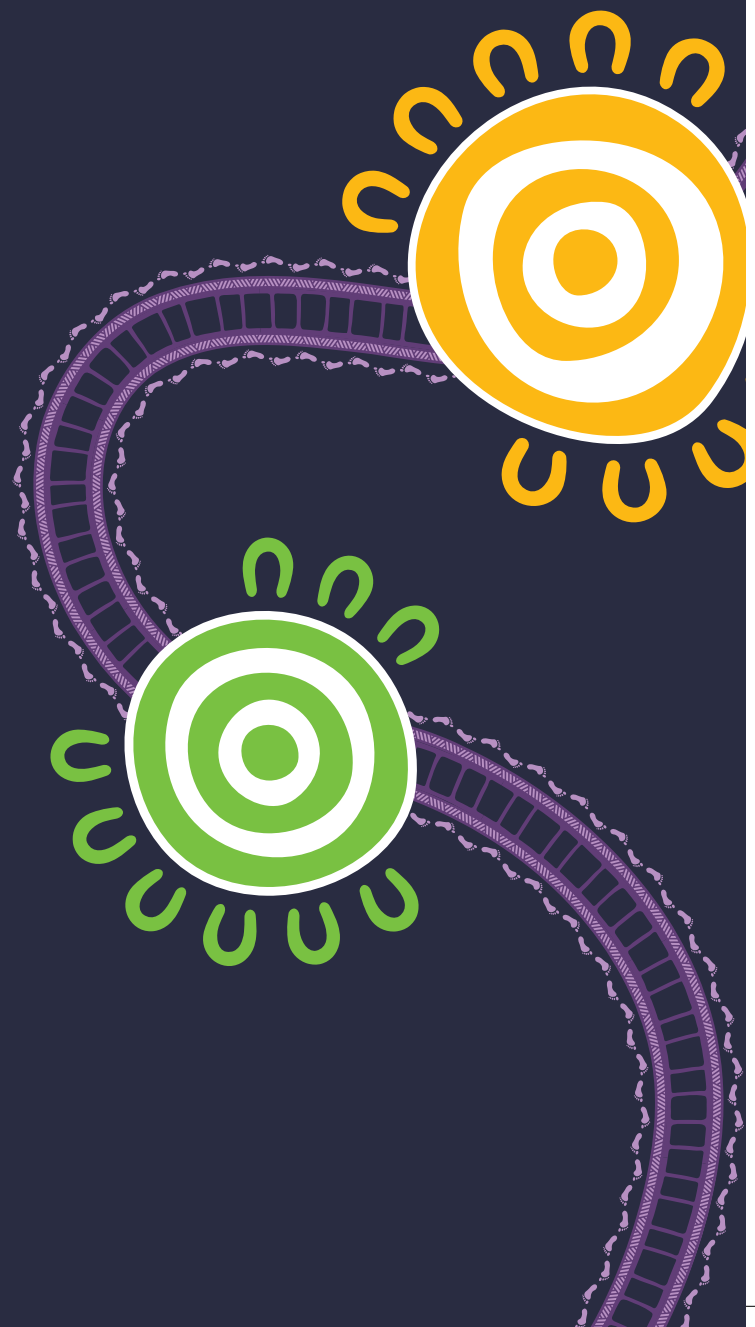
- other government reporting
- case studies
- surveys
- program evaluations
- data linkage projects
- targeted analysis projects.

1. Formal partnerships and shared decision-making | 2. Building the community-controlled sector | 3. Transforming government organisations | 4. Shared access to data and information at a regional level





# Actions and Activities



# Action 1

## Delegated Authority: Commit to progressive systems transformation that has First Nations self-determination at its centre.

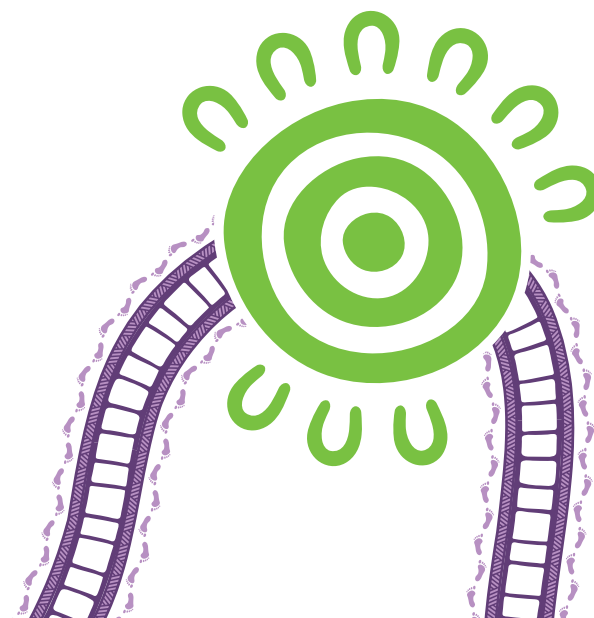
Safe and Supported commits to progressive systems transformation that has Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination at its centre. This action recognises that community control is an act of self-determination and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations in some jurisdictions) deliver better results for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.

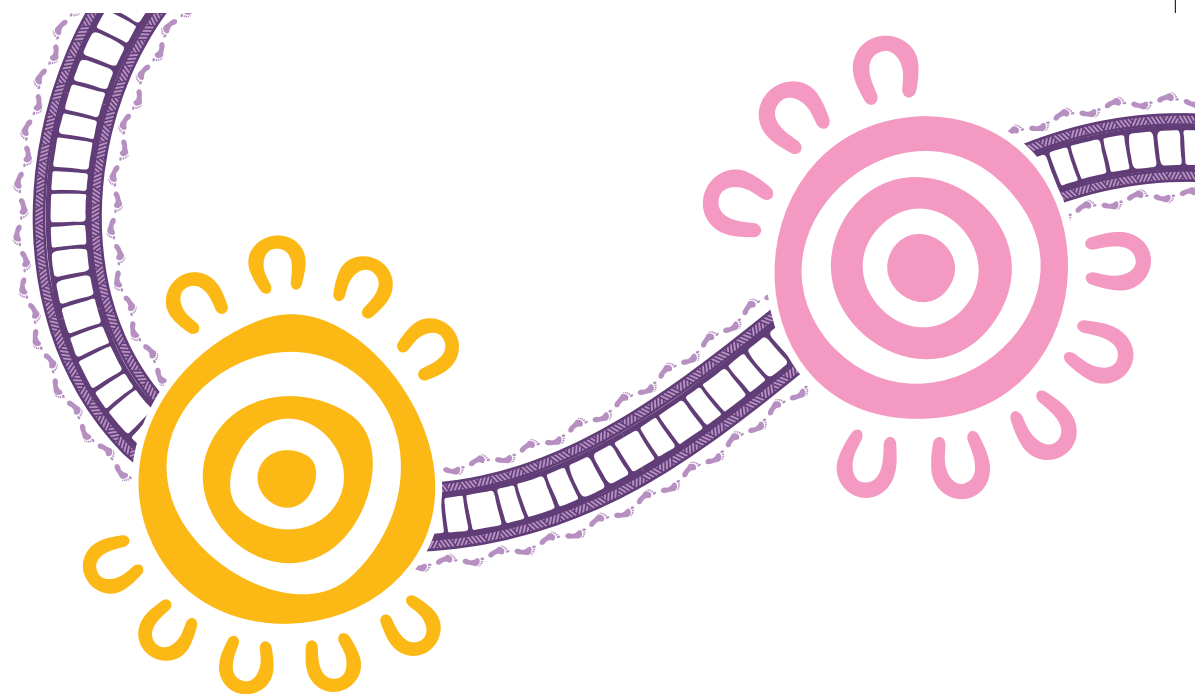
This action commits all governments to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have control over the future wellbeing of their children and young people, and to determine the services and systems that deliver for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, including the outcomes these systems aim to achieve.

This action also aligns with Priority Reform 2 of Closing the Gap, recognising that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community control is an act of self-determination, and that all governments are committed to increasing the proportion of services delivered by ACCOs.

### Commitment

Within the first 2 years of the Action Plan, develop jurisdictional plans to enable self-determination and the exercise of authority in child protection by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including timelines for each jurisdiction's legislative reform to support the delegation of legislative authority with regard to statutory child protection powers. Implementation of jurisdictional plans will progress in line with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community priorities and aspirations for exercising authority.





Activities	Deliverables
<p>a) Document best practice and share learnings of jurisdictions and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about increasing the exercise of authority by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations, to inform the work of all jurisdictions. This activity will capture key elements and outcomes to be striving towards community aspirations and current examples for the restoration of authority.</p> <p>Develop a set of critical elements or design principles, co-led and agreed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, to guide all jurisdictions in transferring delegation of legislative authority and the exercise of self-determination to ACCOs across family support and child protection services. Critical elements or design principles are to be flexible and adaptable to each jurisdiction’s bespoke needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A definition of ‘delegation of legislative authority’.</li> <li>• A product capturing a jurisdictional scan of current approaches.</li> <li>• A best practice and critical elements framework.</li> </ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> 1 year (2023)</p>
<p>b) Each jurisdiction, in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family peak bodies (or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership where no peak body exists) to develop a plan for legislative reform to support the exercise of authority, including specification of the policy, program, process, practice and other supports for implementation.</p> <p>c) Each jurisdiction to take meaningful steps to implement its plans for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations exercising legislative authority and to measure and report on progress.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual jurisdictional plans that demonstrate meaningful steps for transferring delegation of legislative authority and the exercise of self-determination to ACCOs with regard to statutory child protection powers.</li> </ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> 2 years (2024 and 2025)</p>

## What difference will we make?

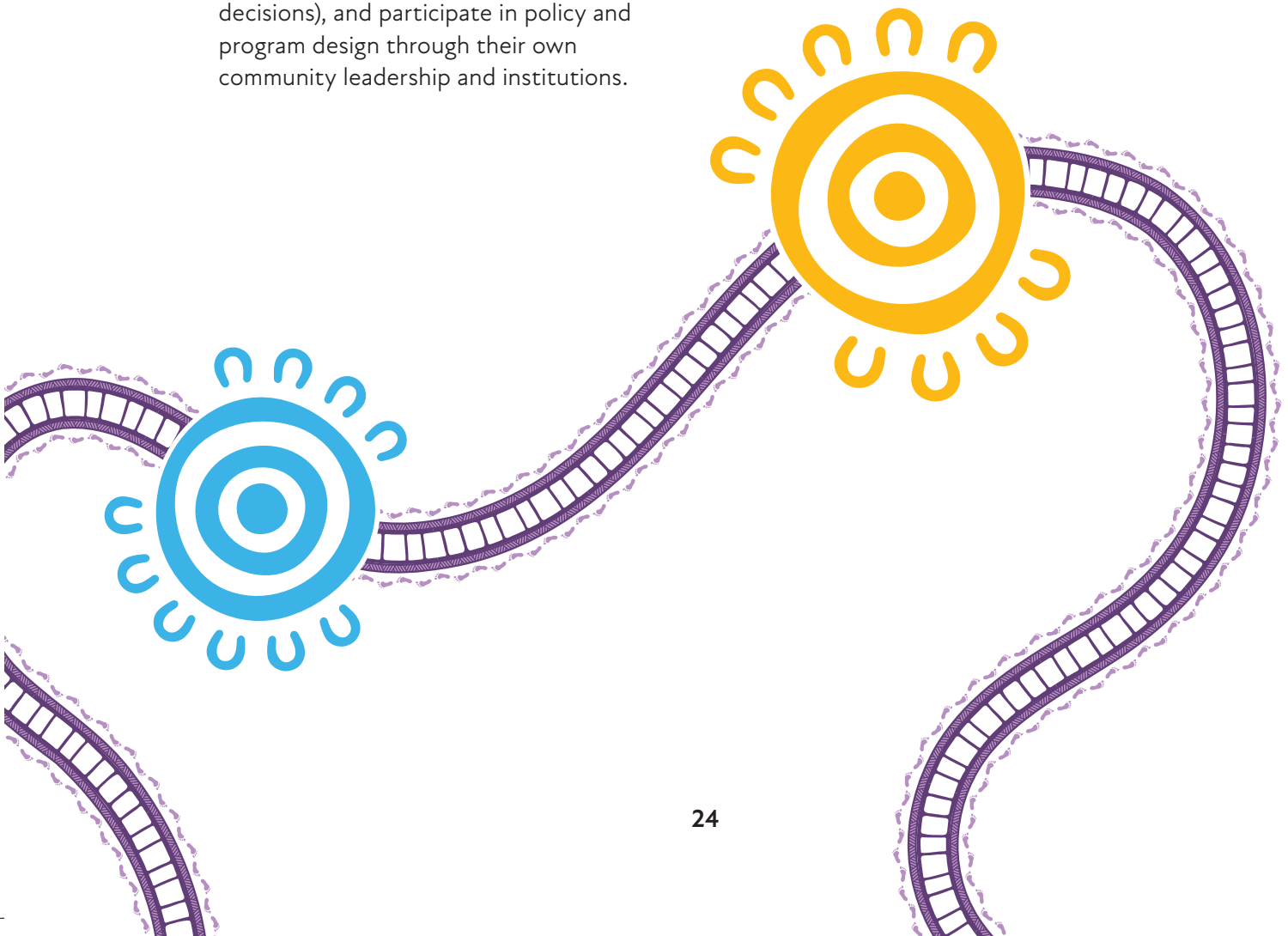
This action will support the achievement of the following 10-Year Outcomes.

- SFN2(a) – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families in contact with child protection systems have their cultural needs (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child-rearing practices) and kinship networks supported. Their right to make decisions about their own lives, within their unique cultural parameters, is recognised.
- SFN2(b) – Systems and services uphold children’s and young people’s rights to their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities and the wellbeing needs arising from those identities, including self-determination and connection to family, community, Country and culture.
- SFN3(a) – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families lead care and protection decision-making for their children (with children and young people involved in all decisions), and participate in policy and program design through their own community leadership and institutions.

- SFN3(b) – ACCOs and community leadership have authority in system design and child protection processes. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and evidence drives best practice.

The activities will support a number of Sub-outcomes, including:

- SFN2.1 (activities b, c and d)
- SFN2.4 (activities a, b, c and d)
- SFN3.1 (activities a, b, c and d)
- SFN3.2 (activities a, b, c and d)
- SFN3.3 (activities a, b and c)
- SFN4.1 (activities b, c and d)
- SFN4.2 (activities a and b).



# Action 2

## **Investing in the Community-Controlled Sector: Shift towards adequate and coordinated funding of early, targeted and culturally safe supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.**

A transformed system requires a strong focus on prevention and early intervention so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people can stay safely with their families and communities. Growing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled child and family sector will mean more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families can be supported earlier and more effectively.

To enable this, this action commits to a shift towards adequate and coordinated funding of early, targeted, holistic and culturally safe supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, determined by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This action also aligns with Priority Reform 2 of Closing the Gap, recognising that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community control is an act of self-determination, that ACCOs achieve better results for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, and that all governments are committed to increasing the proportion of services delivered by ACCOs.

This action will work closely with the Closing the Gap Disability Sector Strengthening Plan and Health Sector Strengthening Plan in its objectives of strengthening the community-controlled disability sector (both within the disability service system and across all service systems) and improving outcomes for, and recognition of the rights of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability.

### **Commitment**

All governments to develop investment strategies that continue to grow the proportion of services delivered by ACCOs and ensure government policy settings support self-determination and the exercise of authority by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. This includes the transition of existing funding to ACCOs. To ensure smooth implementation, governments and non-Indigenous organisations will actively support this transition.

In addition, where new funding initiatives are decided by governments, all governments commit to ensuring a meaningful proportion, aligned to the service needs and level of system representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, is allocated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, particularly community-controlled organisations. Governments will partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to facilitate these allocations through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-led, place-based commissioning models as these are developed over the life of the Action Plan.

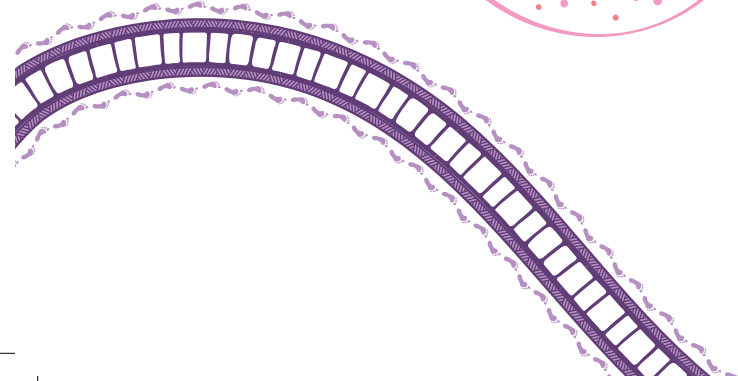
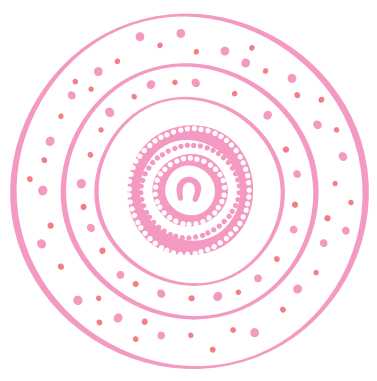
Activities	Deliverables
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- a)** Develop a National Child and Family Investment Strategy:
- The strategy will work in collaboration with Safe and Supported to shift towards adequate and coordinated funding of early, targeted, healing-informed culturally safe support services that are effective in supporting children and families, and are delivered by ACCOs.
  - The strategy will prioritise increasing the proportion of services delivered by ACCOs.
  - Deliverables of the strategy will help inform jurisdictional efforts under activities b to f below.

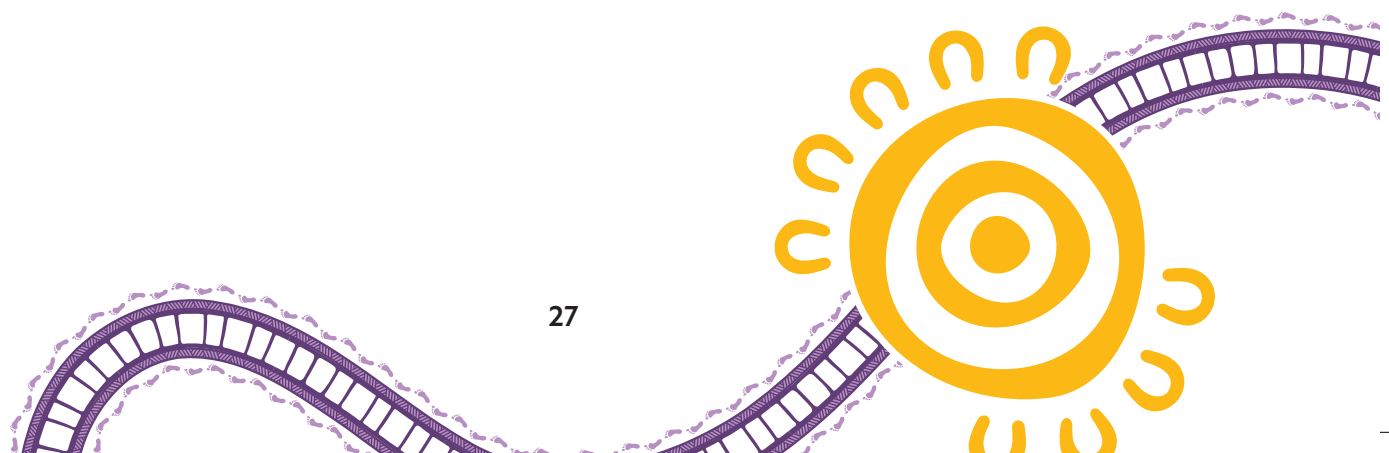
- A National Child and Family Investment Strategy focusing on a clear set of national principles and actions to drive funding priorities within the child and family service system.
- Timing:** 5 years  
(2023–24 to 2026–27)

- b)** Co-design with ACCOs and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family peaks (or leadership where no peak yet exists) a plan to strengthen ACCOs, which considers their aspirations, evidence-based service models of culturally appropriate care, and workforce and infrastructure needs.
- c)** Develop a market strategy to support ACCO capacity and establish market transition approaches that increase the proportion of services delivered by ACCOs. This includes mapping the growth, spread and location of new ACCOs and building the capability of existing ACCOs against where the need is going to be across a jurisdiction.

- Jurisdictional ACCOs market development strategies, which include workforce, infrastructure and market transition approaches.
- Timing:** 1 year  
(2023)



Activities	Deliverables
<p>d) Develop jurisdictional frameworks and plans for recommissioning family support services to achieve quarantined, proportional funding directed to ACCOs to provide services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. This may be through redistributing existing resources to ACCOs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jurisdictional plans include specific priorities for family support services that address the issues associated with child protection intervention, including harmful use of drugs and alcohol, domestic violence and mental health.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jurisdictional commissioning frameworks and investment strategies that deliver dedicated future investment in ACCOs, and which supports self-determination and exercising of authority.</li> </ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> 2 years (2024 and 2025)</p>
<p>e) Develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-led, place-based commissioning models to increase local control over funding priorities and allocation.</p> <p>f) Commence implementation of new commissioning models in each jurisdiction and monitor progress and results in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</p>	<p><b>Timing:</b> 1–3 years (2023 to 2025)</p>
<p>g) Reform funding models and procurement policies to direct proportionate funding and address systemic barriers to support the growth of the ACCO sector, to ensure it is funded in line with the level of system representation and community need.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Redesigned jurisdictional funding models and procurement policies that include increased local control over funding priorities and allocation, encouraging properly funded local systems with local accountability, and capacity to enable self-determination.</li> </ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> 1–5 years (2023 to 2027)</p>





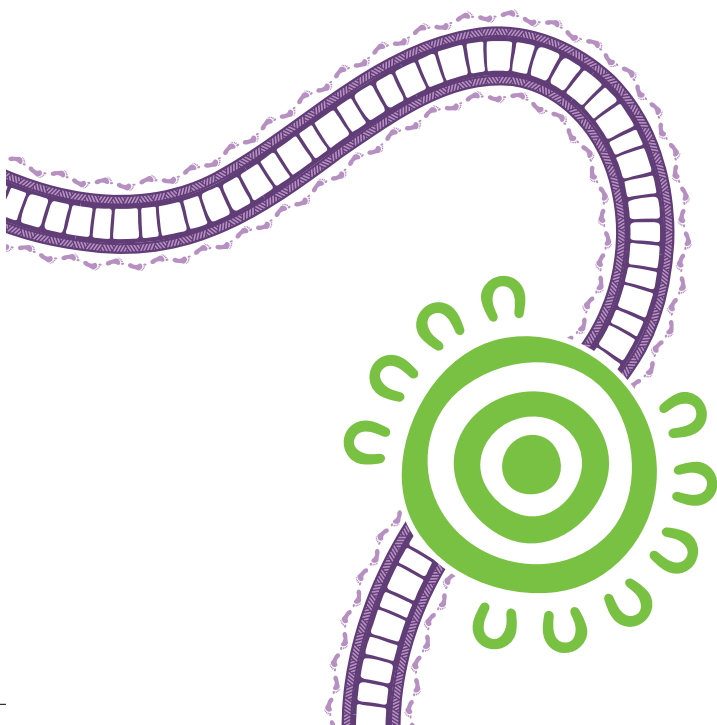
## What difference will we make?

This action will support the achievement of the following 10-Year Outcomes.

- SFN1(a) – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families know they can easily access the services and supports they need, that those services will be safe and respectful of their cultures, and that they will be trauma-informed, child-centred and family-focused.
- SFN1(b) – High-quality child and family wellbeing services are designed and delivered by ACCOs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families, in line with families' needs, and focus on supporting families to stay safe together.
- SFN3(a) – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families lead care and protection decision-making for their children (with children and young people involved in all decisions), and participate in policy and program design through their own community leadership and institutions.
- SFN3(b) – ACCOs and community leadership have authority in system design and child protection processes. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and evidence drives best practice.

The activities will support a number of Sub-outcomes, including:

- SFN1.1 (activity a, b, c, d, e, f and g)
- SFN1.2 (activities a, b, c, d, e, f and g)
- SFN1.4 (activities a and d)
- SFN2.1 (activities a and d)
- SFN2.2 (activities b, c and g)
- SFN3.1 (activities b, c, e and g)
- SFN3.2 (activities a, b, d, e, f and g)
- SFN3.3 (activity e)
- SFN5.1 (activities a and d)
- SFN5.2 (activities b, c and e).



# Action 3

## Data Sovereignty: Build Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infrastructure for sovereignty of data and improve the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander evidence base.

Data sovereignty is about respecting the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to determine the collection and use of data about them. Communities that have control over their own data have the power to set their own agenda, design programs that work for them, and measure their own successes. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led research is also critical to create an evidence base that reflects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, expertise and worldviews.

This action aims to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people determine, collect and use their own data, and lead their own research to inform and determine policies and programs based on evidence and data led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

This action aligns with Closing the Gap Priority Reform 4 and closely links to Action 2 of the Safe and Supported First Action Plan, which looks to establish a coordinated data and research approach, with a particular focus on building Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sovereignty of data.



This Action is strongly linked to the outcome and actions from the Disability Sector Strengthening Plan.

• **Disability Sector Strengthening Plan Outcome:**

Service Delivery is underpinned by evidence-based policy, informed by First Nations disability research, data and evaluation.

– **Action C6:**

Develop and implement a national First Nations - Disability Data Strategy

– **Action C7:**

Develop and Implement Culture is Inclusion Research Agenda.

We will ensure ongoing collaboration and alignment with this work.

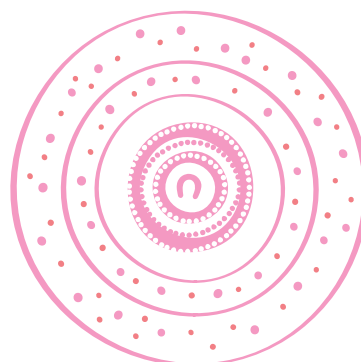




## Commitment

Build Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infrastructure and supports for sovereignty of data, and improve the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander evidence base to ensure culturally safe services and systems in child protection and family support services, and access to timely and local level data.

Activities	Deliverables
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Develop mechanisms and infrastructure to support data capability of ACCOs as part of Priority Reform 4 of Closing the Gap.</li> <li>b) In consultations with state and territory governments, implement the agreed approach to data sovereignty, once the approach for the Australian Government is known for Priority Reform 4 of Closing the Gap.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow Australian Government specifications of agreed definition and approach to data sovereignty. Mechanisms for jurisdictional data sharing that improves data infrastructure of the ACCO sector.</li> </ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> 5 years (2023 to 2027)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c) Governments actively support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance groups to identify the data needs of jurisdictions (including jurisdictional and national data requirements under Closing the Gap Priority Reform 4 and the ATSICPP indicators), and the ACCO sector and how this data can be shared to support best practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess data at state, territory and local levels for the ACCO sector.</li> </ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> 1–1.5 years (2023 to 2024)</p>



Activities	Deliverables
<p>d) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led scoping exercise on how an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Support would operate, and how it would help establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data and research infrastructure nationally, including in each jurisdiction.</p> <p>e) Establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Support, to increase access to research that is grounded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and theoretical frameworks, and provides opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led research. This could include consideration of building the evidence base for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, parents and carers living with disability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Designed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives for their communities, with appropriate governance and support to direct community-based research.</li> <li>– Focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and practice.</li> <li>– Includes review and evaluation functions.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> 1–1.5 years (2023 to 2024)</p>
<p>f) Jurisdictions give in-principle support to the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led research and evidence, and support including through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Support. Following its establishment, jurisdictions will consider and work towards agreeing ongoing funding arrangements to support the national, state and territory operations of a high-quality First Nations-led national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Centre for Excellence.</p>	<p><b>Timing:</b> 1–3 years (2023 to 2025)</p>
<p>g) Support the review and evaluation of initiatives and knowledge sharing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations.</p>	<p><b>Timing:</b> 5 years (2023 to 2027)</p>

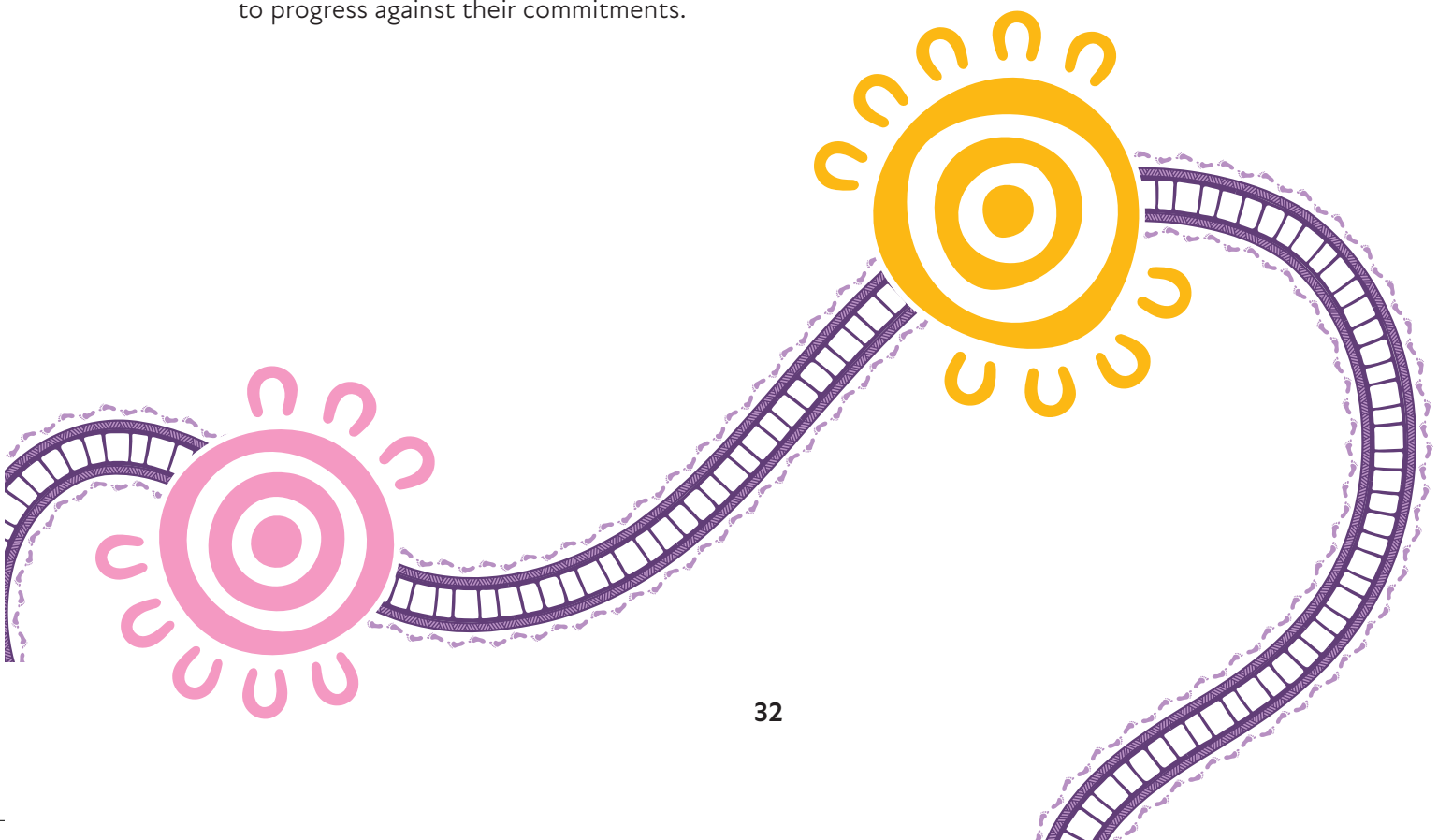
## What difference will we make?

This action will support achievement of the following 10-Year Outcomes.

- SFN1(b) – High-quality child and family wellbeing services are designed and delivered by ACCOs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families, in line with families' needs, and focus on supporting families to stay safe together.
- SFN3(b) – ACCOs and community leadership have authority in system design and child protection processes. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and evidence drive best practice.
- SFN4(a) – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families access the information and supports they need to feel confident and empowered engaging with child and family welfare systems.
- SFN4(b) – The design, implementation and evaluation of all aspects of child protection systems are continuously overseen by robust Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-designed governance and accountability mechanisms, with governments held genuinely accountable to progress against their commitments.

The activities will support a number of Sub-outcomes, including:

- SFN2.1 (activity c)
- SFN2.2 (activities a, c, d, e and g)
- SFN2.4 (activity b)
- SFN4.1 (activities a and b)
- SFN4.2 (activities a, b, c, d, e, f and g)
- SFN4.3 (activities a, b and c).



# Action 4

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce: Develop a national approach to continue building a sustainable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family sector workforce.

A strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce is a necessary foundation for achieving better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. This action will ensure jurisdictions and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people work together to build a sustainable, well-equipped Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family sector workforce and community-controlled sector.

This links closely to Action 3 of the Safe and Supported First Action Plan, which promotes a culturally safe workforce that understands culture and genuinely supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, and with the Early Childhood Care and Development Sector Strengthening Plan, the Disability Sector Strengthening Plan and the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership.

This action also aligns with Priority Reform 2 of Closing the Gap, recognising that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community control is an act of self-determination, that ACCOs achieve better results for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, and that all governments are committed to increasing the proportion of services delivered by ACCOs.

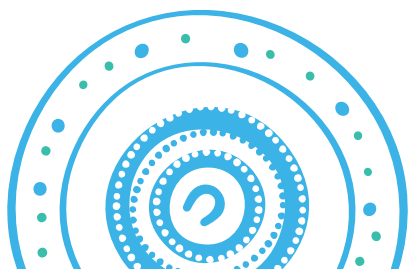
### Commitment

Develop a national approach to continue building a sustainable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, and enhance and maintain their skills in child protection and family support services to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people exercising authority.



The Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership is a commitment under Closing the Gap to establishing formal policy partnerships between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives to develop joined-up advice and approaches on early childhood care and development.

Aligned with the Closing the Gap priority reforms, the Early Childhood Care and Development Sector Strengthening Plan aims to achieve increased service delivery, coverage, capacity, quality and resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations across the early childhood education, child protection and family support sectors.



Activities	Deliverables
<p>a) Scope current and future needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, and community-controlled child protection and family support workforce.</p> <p>This action aligns with A6 of the Closing the Gap <a href="#">Early Childhood and Care Development Sector Strengthening Plan</a>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce development report that includes current needs analysis, and projected needs analysis (including considerations regarding coverage, capacity, quality and resources).</li> </ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> 1–1.5 years (2023 to 2024)</p>
<p>b) Develop strategies to grow the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>targeted vocational training pathways and access to fee-free or subsidised tertiary education, vocation and apprenticeship training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</li> <li>support for ACCOs being able to attract and retain staff to match their current and future workforce needs, such as tailoring professional support, fostering professional development and creating career pathway plans, and addressing recruitment and retention barriers.</li> <li>Improve the cultural awareness and understanding of the workforce engaged with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children living with disability.</li> </ul> <p>c) Implement actions under <a href="#">Sector Strengthening Plan: Early Childhood Care and Development</a>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actions that fully align with Safe and Supported will be prioritised for implementation following further consideration with jurisdictions.</li> </ul> <p>d) Support and align actions under the Disability Sector Strengthening Plan to ensure that services are both culturally safe and disability-inclusive.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jurisdictional strategies to grow the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce that include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vocational training</li> <li>Tertiary education pathways and embedding cultural safety within tertiary education</li> <li>Attraction and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff</li> <li>Direct support to ACCOs to develop, support and attract Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> 5 years (2023 to 2027)</p>





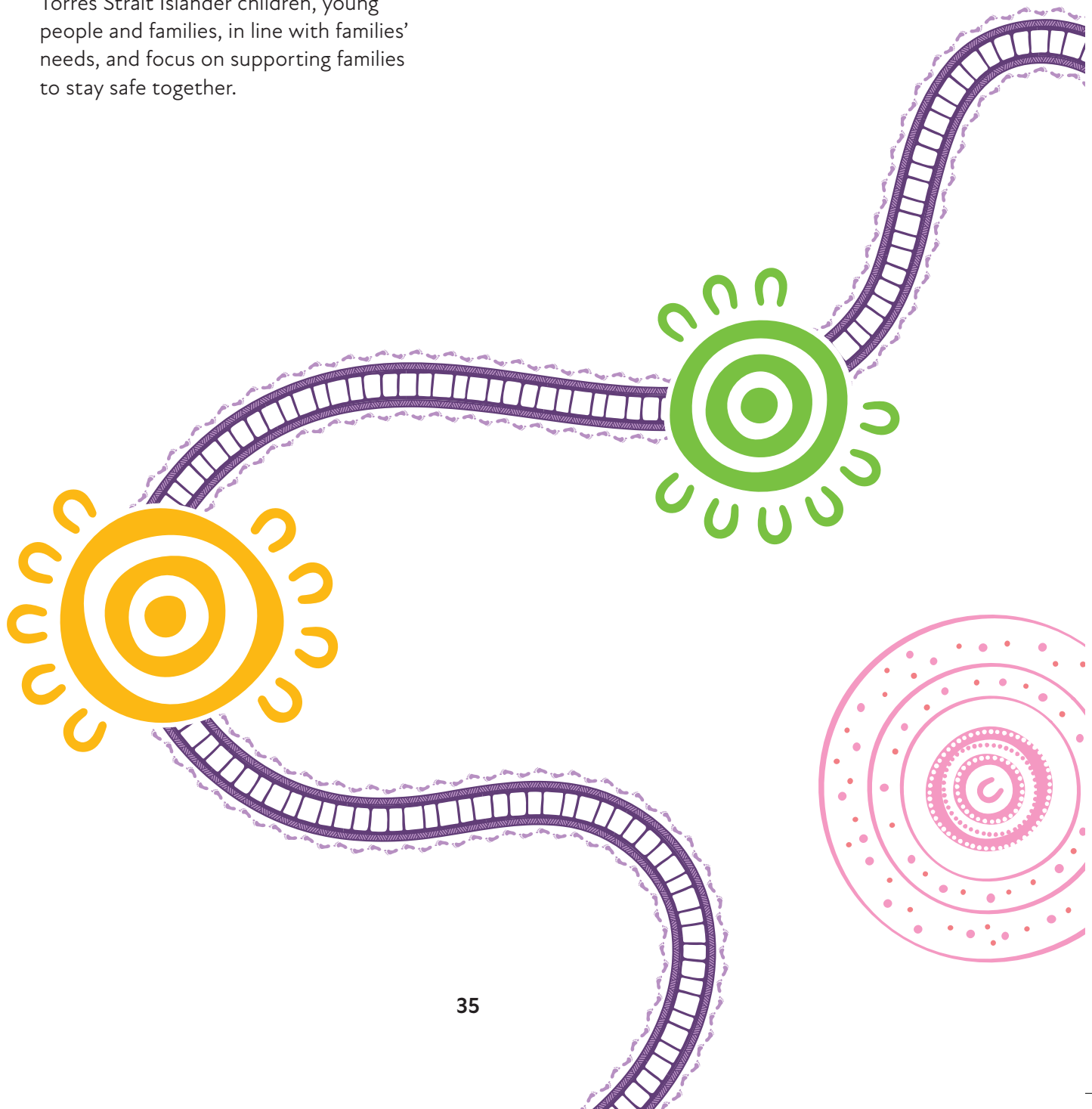
## What difference will we make?

This action will support achievement of the following 10-Year Outcomes.

- SFN1(a) – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families know they can easily access the services and supports they need, that those services will be safe and respectful of their cultures, and that they will be trauma-informed, child-centred and family-focused.
- SFN1(b) – High-quality child and family wellbeing services are designed and delivered by ACCOs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families, in line with families' needs, and focus on supporting families to stay safe together.

The activities will support a number of Sub-outcomes, including:

- SFN1.2 (activities a, b and c)
- SFN1.3 (activity b and d)
- SFN2.2 (activities a, b and c)
- SFN2.4 (activity b and d).



# Action 5

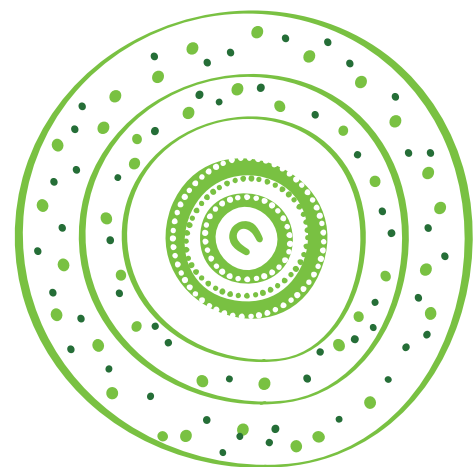
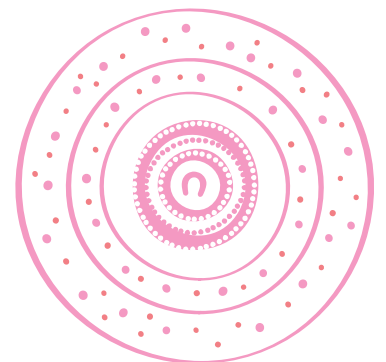
## Active Efforts: Implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle to the standard of active efforts.

This action commits to implementing all 5 elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP), and improving the accountability of all governments and sectors in reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in child protection systems. It supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to be connected to family, community, culture and Country. This action also recognises that reunification and restoration is a key part of ATSICPP implementation for state and territory governments (across all elements).

Safe and Supported recognises that all service providers have a responsibility to respect and protect the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families (including their rights to maintain and practice their cultures, grow up in their own families, and have a say in decisions that affect their lives). This links closely to Action 8 of the Safe and Supported First Action Plan, which promotes the ATSICPP being implemented across all relevant service systems.

### Commitment

Implement the ATSICPP to the standard of active efforts.



Activities	Deliverables
<p>a) In partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, develop national standards for active efforts to implement the ATSICPP to increase consistency and accountability.</p> <p>b) Develop jurisdictional plans to implement the ATSICPP across the system elements, including legislation, policy, programs, processes and practice. This includes all jurisdictions committing to developing a plan that seeks to improve efforts to fully implement the ATSICPP in partnership with one another.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Standards for active efforts to implement all 5 elements of the ATSICPP.</li> <li>• Individual jurisdictional plans for implementation of all 5 elements of the ATSICPP.</li> </ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> 2 years (2023 and 2024)</p>
<p>c) In partnership with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:</p> <p>i) review the existing indicator set to ensure they remain fit for purpose</p> <p>ii) continue to progress the development and implementation of national reporting on the 5 elements of the ATSICPP. This includes to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• finalise national indicator specifications</li> <li>• establish a national data collection process</li> <li>• publish national indicator reporting.</li> </ul> <p>d) Until reporting on all national indicators is in place, each jurisdiction is to report annually to the Safe and Supported Strategic Advisory Body on relevant state/territory specific ATSICPP indicators and progress made towards implementation of national indicators.</p>	<p><b>Timing:</b> Over the course of the First Action Plan (2023 to 2026)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued development of national reporting of the 5 elements of the ATSICPP.</li> <li>• Ongoing annual reporting of national indicators as they are developed.</li> <li>• Regular progress updates on progress of national indicators' development towards full implementation and national reporting.</li> <li>• Report on the outcome of a review into the existing indicator set.</li> </ul> <p><b>Timing (c.i):</b> 1 year (2023)</p> <p><b>Timing (d):</b> 6 months (mid-2023)</p>



## What difference will we make?

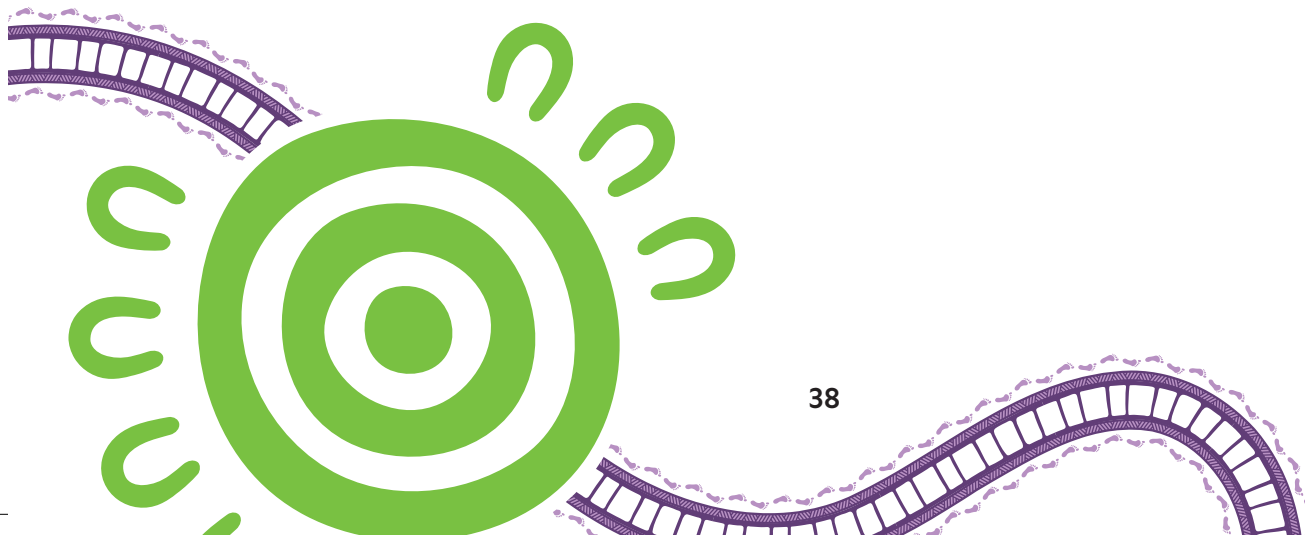
This action will support achievement of the following 10-Year Outcomes.

- SFN1(a) – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families know they can easily access the services and supports they need, that those services will be safe and respectful of their cultures, and that they will be trauma-informed, child-centred and family-focused.
- SFN1(b) – High-quality child and family wellbeing services are designed and delivered by ACCOs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families, in line with families' needs, and focus on supporting families to stay safe together.
- SFN2(a) – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families in contact with child protection systems have their cultural needs (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child-rearing practices) and kinship networks supported. Their right to make decisions about their own lives, within their unique cultural parameters, is recognised.
- SFN2(b) – Systems and services uphold children's and young people's rights to their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities and the wellbeing needs arising from those identities, including connections to family, community, Country and culture.

- SFN3(a) – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families lead care and protection decision-making for their children (with children and young people involved in all decisions), and participate in policy and program design through their own community leadership and institutions.
- SFN3(b) – ACCOs and community leadership have authority in system design and child protection processes. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and evidence drives best practice.

The activities will support a number of Sub-outcomes, including:

- SFN1.3 (activities a and b)
- SFN1.4 (activities a and b)
- SFN2.1 (activities a, b, c and d)
- SFN2.2 (activity a)
- SFN2.4 (activities a, b, c and d)
- SFN3.1 (activity a)
- SFN3.2 (activities a and b)
- SFN4.2 (activity c)
- SFN4.3 (activity c).



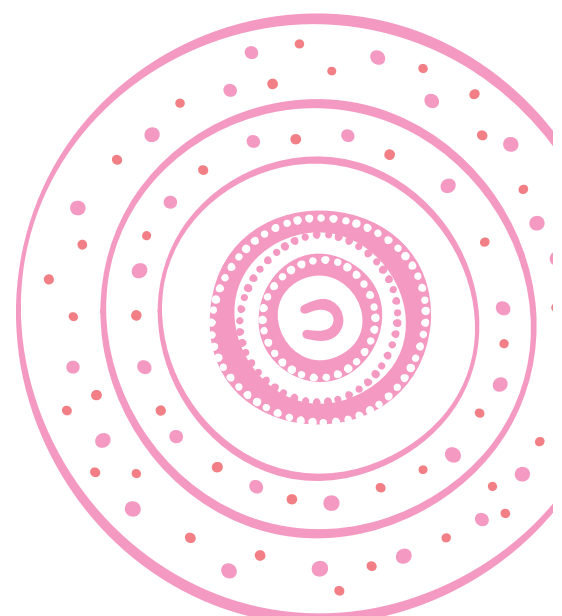
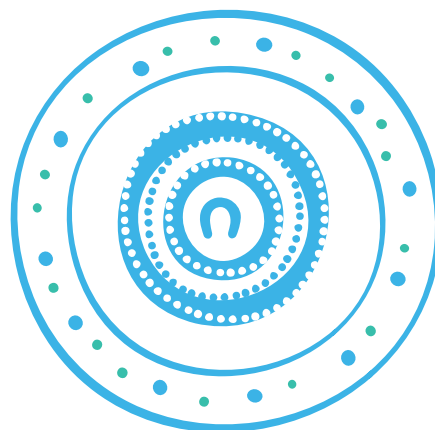
# Action 6

## Legal Supports: Improve availability and quality of legal support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families engaged with child protection systems.

Culturally safe and appropriate legal representation is critical in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families at risk of entering, or already in contact with, child protection systems. This action will work towards improved systems that are delivered by ACCOs where possible, to reduce systemic racism and power imbalances in interactions with relevant systems. This action also aligns with Priority Reform 3 of Closing the Gap, ensuring that mainstream governance agencies and institutions that deliver services and programs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people undertake systemic and structural transformation.

### Commitment

Improve availability and quality of legal support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families engaged with child protection systems, and acknowledge the issues of equitable access to justice.



Activities	Deliverables
<p>a) Conduct a scoping study on the interface between child protection systems and relevant legal services (including domestic and family violence legal services) and youth justice systems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The study will assess the issues and barriers experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in accessing legal supports. This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families living with disability, experiencing disadvantage and/or vulnerability, and systemic racism.</li> <li>This includes mapping the issues faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families at risk of, or already in contact with child protection across each jurisdiction, and quantifying levels of access to justice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Needs assessment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families who require access to legal supports, and an understanding of the barriers they experience.</li> </ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> 1 year (2023)</p>
<p>b) From the scoping study, governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners to identify areas for improvement across systems, and commit to address the barriers faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in seeking legal supports. This will be developed in close alignment with the Closing the Gap Justice Policy Partnership and the <i>National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032</i>.</p>	<p><b>Timing:</b> 1 year (2024)</p>
<p>c) In partnership with Attorney-Generals’ departments, develop and implement joint proposals to progress this action.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint proposals (informed by findings from the scoping study) with attorney-generals’ departments that will improve the accessibility and quality of legal services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.</li> </ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> Over the course of the Action Plan (2023 to 2026)</p>

## What difference will we make?

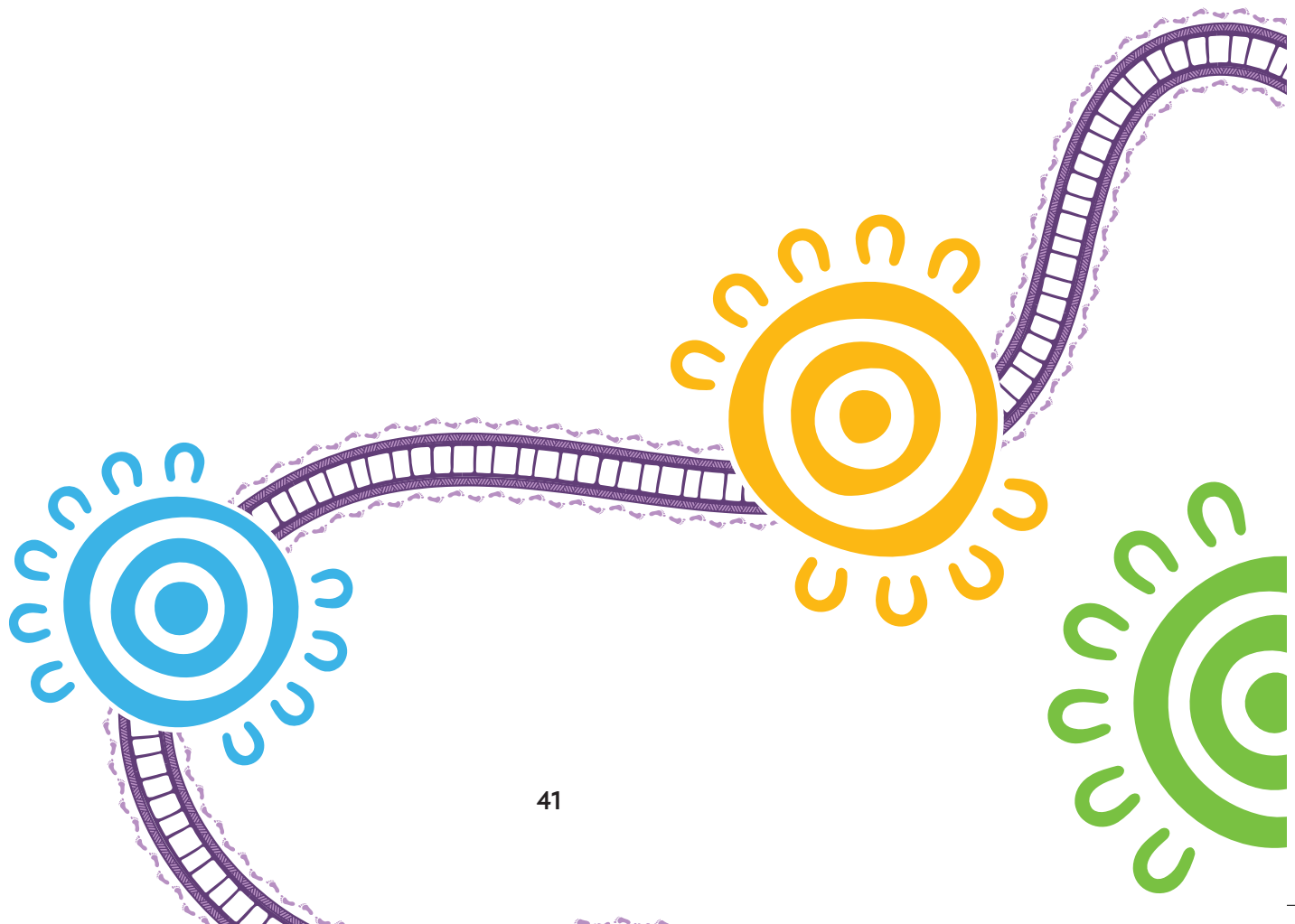
This action will support the achievement of the following 10-Year Outcomes.

- SFN1(a) – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families know they can easily access the services and supports they need, that those services will be safe and respectful of their cultures, and that they will be trauma-informed, child-centred and family-focused.
- SFN2(a) – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families in contact with child protection systems have their cultural needs (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child-rearing practices) and kinship networks supported. Their right to make decisions about their own lives, within their unique cultural parameters, is recognised.

- SFN4(a) – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families access the information and supports they need to feel confident and empowered when engaging with child and family welfare systems.
- SFN5(a) – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities have their holistic needs fulfilled. As such, fewer families experience social, emotional or economic risk factors for child neglect or abuse.

The activities will support a number of Sub-outcomes, including:

- SFN2.4 (activities b and c)
- SFN4.1 (activities a, b and c)
- SFN5.1 (activities a, b and c)
- SFN5.2 (activities b)
- SFN5.3 (activity a, b and c).





# Action 7

## Advocating for Accountability and Oversight: Establish and strengthen advocacy through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioners

A child's-rights approach in implementing the Action Plan will support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to thrive in life. Like all children and young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have a right to grow up safe, connected and supported to reach their full potential. This right is enshrined in both the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children also have the right to exercise agency in decision-making on matters that affect their lives, and the right, in community with other members of their group, to enjoy their culture, religion and language.

This action commits to establishing advocacy and accountability roles in all jurisdictions to amplify the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, drive systemic reforms to support their rights and wellbeing, and hold governments and services accountable. This action aligns with Priority Reform 3 of Closing the Gap, ensuring that government agencies and institutions that deliver services and programs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people undertake systemic and structural transformation.

The action also aligns with the United Nations' benchmark guidelines for human rights institutions the 'Paris Principles'<sup>3</sup>) in recognising that oversight and advocacy roles need to be independent from government and equipped with adequate powers and resources to fully engage and contribute their knowledge.

### Commitment

Establish and strengthen advocacy, engagement and accountability roles in all jurisdictions, which will support the achievement of outcomes under Safe and Supported, and efforts to achieve Target 12 of Closing the Gap. This includes developing agreed minimum requirements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner roles in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; establishing such roles where they do not exist; or reviewing and strengthening existing roles against those minimum requirements for independent, effective and empowered Commissioners.

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3 United Nations, [Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions \(The Paris Principles\)](#), General Assembly Resolution 48/134, adopted 20 December 1993

Activities	Deliverables
<p>a) Develop minimum requirements for independent, effective and empowered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Commissioners or similar roles in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives to guide the work of jurisdictions to implement this action.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum requirements for independent, effective and empowered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Commissioner or similar roles.</li> </ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> 6 months (2023)</p>
<p>b) In jurisdictions without a Commissioner, undertake work to establish this role (or similar) and in jurisdictions with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioner, develop and implement a plan to strengthen the role, guided by the minimum requirements agreed through Action 7(a).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocacy and accountability roles in all jurisdictions to amplify the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, drive systemic reforms to support their rights and wellbeing, and hold governments and services accountable.</li> </ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> Over the course of the Action Plan (2023 to 2026)</p>
<p>c) In partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance bodies determine the specific parameters and functions of a National Advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People (National Advocate).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A National Advocate would be responsible for monitoring and reporting on the effectiveness of actions to implement Safe and Supported to ensure it delivers real and tangible outcomes for children and young people.</li> <li>The National Advocate would collaborate on matters of common interest with the National Children’s Commissioner, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner and jurisdictional Children’s Commissioners (and equivalents).</li> <li>Opportunities for a National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People will be considered throughout the life of the Action Plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A National Advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People.</li> </ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> 4 years (2023 to 2026)</p>

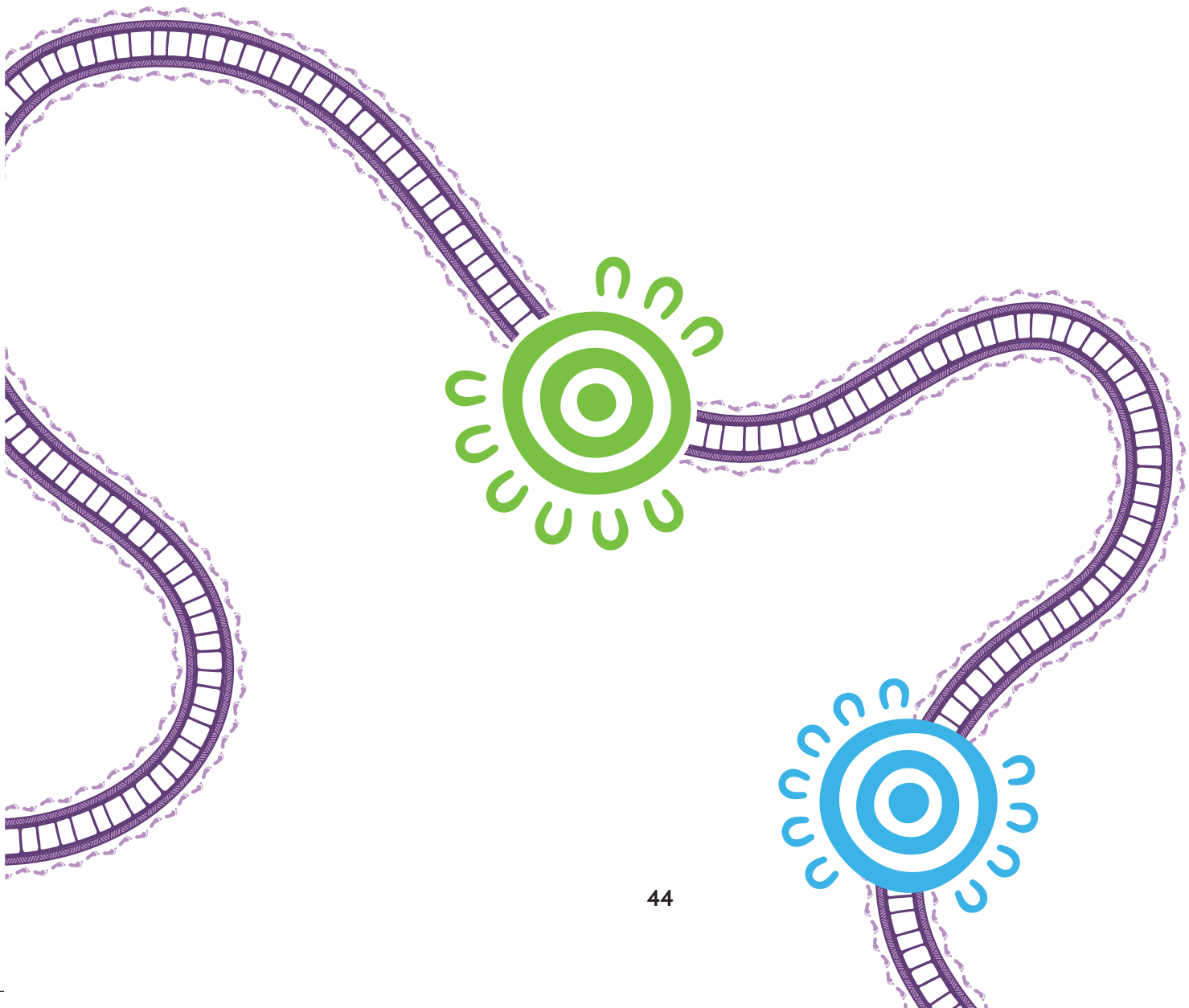
## What difference will we make?

This action will support achievement of the following 10-Year Outcomes.

- SFN4(b) – The design, implementation and evaluation of all aspects of child protection systems are continuously overseen by robust Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-designed governance and accountability mechanisms, with governments held genuinely accountable to progress against their commitments.

The activities will support a number of Sub-outcomes, including:

- SFN2.4 (activities a, b and c)
- SFN4.1 (activities a, b and c).



# Action 8

## **Social Determinants of Child Safety and Wellbeing: Work across portfolios impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.**

To reduce the number of children, young people and families that come into contact with child protection systems, all the social determinants of child safety and wellbeing – including poverty, institutional racism and access to services – must be taken into account. This will require better connecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family service systems with other social supports, including housing, education, employment, health, disability, social and emotional wellbeing, justice and family safety. Better systems, and improved availability of services delivered by ACCOs to connect and collaborate, will enable families to keep their children safe and well by providing them with the resources and supports they need. This aligns strongly with the ‘Prevention’ element of the ATSICPP, which protects children’s right to be brought up in their families by ensuring that families have their essential needs fulfilled.

Priorities to focus on under this action will be chosen between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners. They will be supported by strong accountability and oversight, and reported on through the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy. This will include considering ways to support Priority Reform 2 of Closing the Gap to build the Community-Controlled Sector by building on workforce sector strengthening plans in the areas of early childhood care and development, housing, health and disability, as well as addressing Outcome 11 of Closing the Gap, which looks to reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (10–17 years) in detention by at least 30 per cent, by 2031.

### **Commitment**

Actively work across portfolios impacting children and families to address the social determinants of safety and wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability. This includes intersecting with work under way for other national initiatives (refer to Appendix A for other national initiatives).

Activities	Deliverables
<p>a) Strengthen the interface between policies and service systems supporting children and families, and those addressing the social determinants of child safety and wellbeing. This includes to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advocate and engage with portfolio service systems in the areas of early childhood development, adult and youth justice, domestic and family violence, disability, health and mental health, drugs and alcohol, education, housing, social security and employment services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish an agreed communication and collaboration process/approach between Safe and Supported and other national initiative governance structures representing social determinants of child safety and wellbeing.</li> </ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> Over the course of the Action Plan (2023 to 2026)</p>
<p>b) Actively support a holistic and coordinated response to the achievement of the targets under Closing the Gap. This includes the following Australian Government measure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a first step, the Improving Multidisciplinary Responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families with multiple and complex needs (IMR) initiative will be implemented (commencing in 2023). Governments and the Leadership Group will determine the priorities of this action over the course of the First Action Plan.</li> </ul> <p>A targeted and focused approach will be taken in prioritising other joint initiatives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake joint initiatives as agreed by all Parties.</li> <li>• Implement the IMR program that supports community-led redesigned service models for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families with multiple and complex needs.</li> </ul> <p><b>Timing:</b> Over the course of the Action Plan (2023 to 2026)</p>





The IMR program will support community-led redesigned service models for holistic prevention, early intervention and crisis responses to better support the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families with multiple and complex needs. This includes a focus on strengthening the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities to provide coordinated and integrated holistic responses that are culturally safe, place-based, community-led and embeds the ATSI CPP and its 5 elements of prevention, placement, participation, partnership and connection.



Activities	Deliverables
<p>In line with Action 7 (Disability) of the Safe and Supported First Action Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c) Partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their organisations, including ACCOs and peak bodies, on specific issues and supports required for children, young people, parents and/or carers who live with disability or developmental concerns.</li> <li>d) Governments will also collaborate and support the implementation of related disability initiatives, including the Disability Sector Strengthening Plan and <i>Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031</i>, to ensure that their application includes specific and dedicated actions to advance the safety and wellbeing of children and families.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A program of work co-led with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their organisations, including ACCOs and peak bodies (consistent with the principles of Closing the Gap): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– to ensure accessible and responsive services which meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, parents and/or carers who live with disability or developmental concerns; and</li> <li>– to support the development of ACCO service providers and disability sector organisations, including attracting support workers, allied health professionals and specialist roles throughout the service system in line with the Disability Sector Strengthening Plan.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<p><b>Timing:</b> Over the course of the Action Plan (2023 to 2026)</p>

## What difference will we make?

This action will support achievement of the following 10-Year Outcomes.

- SFN1(a) – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families know they can easily access the services and supports they need, that those services will be safe and respectful of their cultures, and that they will be trauma-informed, child-centred and family-focused.
- SFN1(b) – High-quality child and family wellbeing services are designed and delivered by ACCOs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families, in line with families’ needs, and focus on supporting families to stay safe together.

- SFN5(a) – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities have their holistic needs fulfilled. As such, fewer families experience social, emotional or economic risk factors for child abuse and neglect.

The activities will support a number of Sub-outcomes, including:

- SFN1.2 (activity d)
- SFN1.4 (activities a, b and c)
- SFN2.1 (activities a, b and c)
- SFN2.3 (activities a, b and c)
- SFN3.3 (activity c)
- SFN5.1 (activities a, b, c and d)
- SFN5.2 (activities b and c)
- SFN5.3 (activities a, b, c and d).

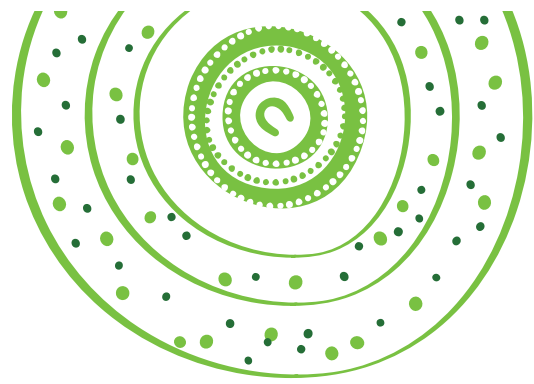




# Oversight and Accountability



# Governance



Formal partnerships and shared decision-making is the first of 4 priority reforms under Closing the Gap. Clause 28 of Closing the Gap outlines the commitment of all governments to build and strengthen structures that empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to share decision-making authority with governments to accelerate policy and place-based progress against Closing the Gap.

*“In order to effect real change, governments must work collaboratively and in genuine, formal partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples because they are the essential agents of change.”*

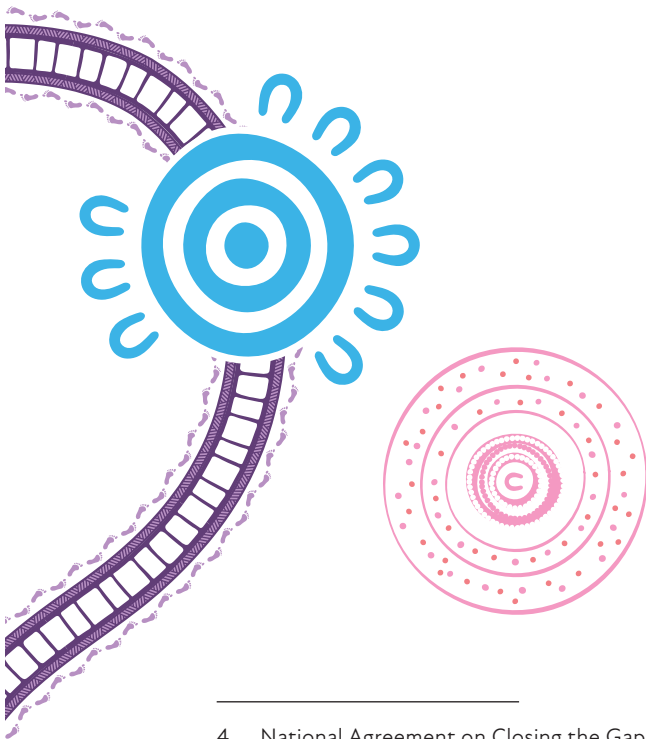
*Engagement survey participant from the Northern Territory, National Agreement on Closing the Gap*

Shared decision-making between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is consensus-based and transparent, enables open communication by a wide variety of voices with living experience, and involves aligning community priorities with programs and services, with both parties having the same access to data and information.<sup>4</sup>

To deliver on Priority Reform 1 of Closing the Gap, the governance structure embeds genuine partnership and shared decision-making between Australian governments and the Leadership Group through a formal Partnership Agreement for Shared Decision-making.

Governance arrangements are shown on page 52. These aim to streamline interaction and support alignment across the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan and the Safe and Supported First Action Plan. Terms of Reference clarify roles and responsibilities and how the bodies interact.

Leadership Group representation and shared decision-making within Safe and Supported governance is described on the following page.



4 National Agreement on Closing the Gap, [Priority Reform 1, Formal Partnership and Shared Decision Making](#).

## **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group (Leadership Group)**

Convened and chaired by SNAICC, the Leadership Group is the main Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander oversight and shared decision-making body for Safe and Supported.

The Leadership Group's members and special advisory members include jurisdictional peak bodies and nominated representatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioners and subject matter experts. The Department of Social Services funds SNAICC to facilitate engagement by the Leadership Group.

## **Community Services Ministers and Children and Families Secretaries**

Community Services Ministers and Children and Families Secretaries includes ministerial representatives of statutory child protection and family support portfolios and senior officials from relevant government departments. The Leadership Group will partner with Australian, state and territory governments through these forums to share decision-making for Safe and Supported.

These forums will engage with Ministers responsible for other portfolios, including education, health, disability, adult and youth justice, housing, employment, Indigenous affairs, and family safety to influence improved social determinants' outcomes for children and families.

## **Shared Decision-making Body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children**

Comprising members of the Leadership Group, and representation from the Australian Government, state and territory governments, the Shared Decision-making Body oversees delivery of the Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander Action Plan and Safe and Supported First Action Plan actions concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities.

## **Strategic Advisory Body**

The Strategic Advisory Body brings together all parties to coordinate and sequence delivery across Safe and Supported Action Plans, ensuring Working Groups are aligned with related strategies and national initiatives. It refers items regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from First Action Plan Working Groups to the Shared Decision-making Body for consideration.

## **Working Groups**

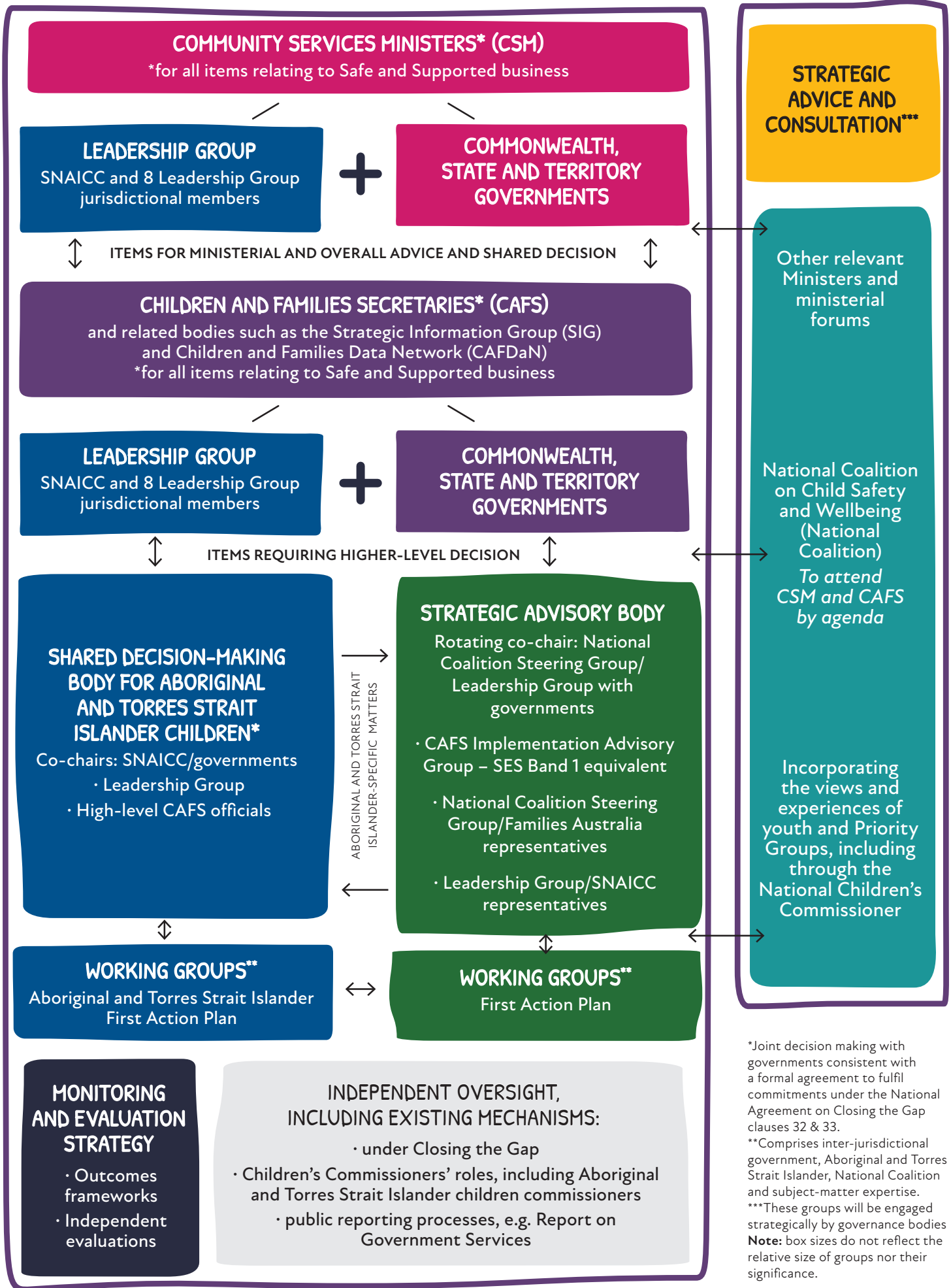
Working Groups are raised as needed to drive delivery of the Action Plans. The Leadership Group will lead the implementation of actions under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan and partner with other working groups delivering the Safe and Supported First Action Plan.

## **The voice of living experience**

Governance bodies will incorporate the voices of living experience into the design and delivery of actions. This will occur through drawing on mechanisms such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioners and peak bodies, including those represented on, or consulted by, the Leadership Group. Subject to co-design, the National Advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People role (Action 7) will also play a key role in incorporating the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people into Safe and Supported governance.

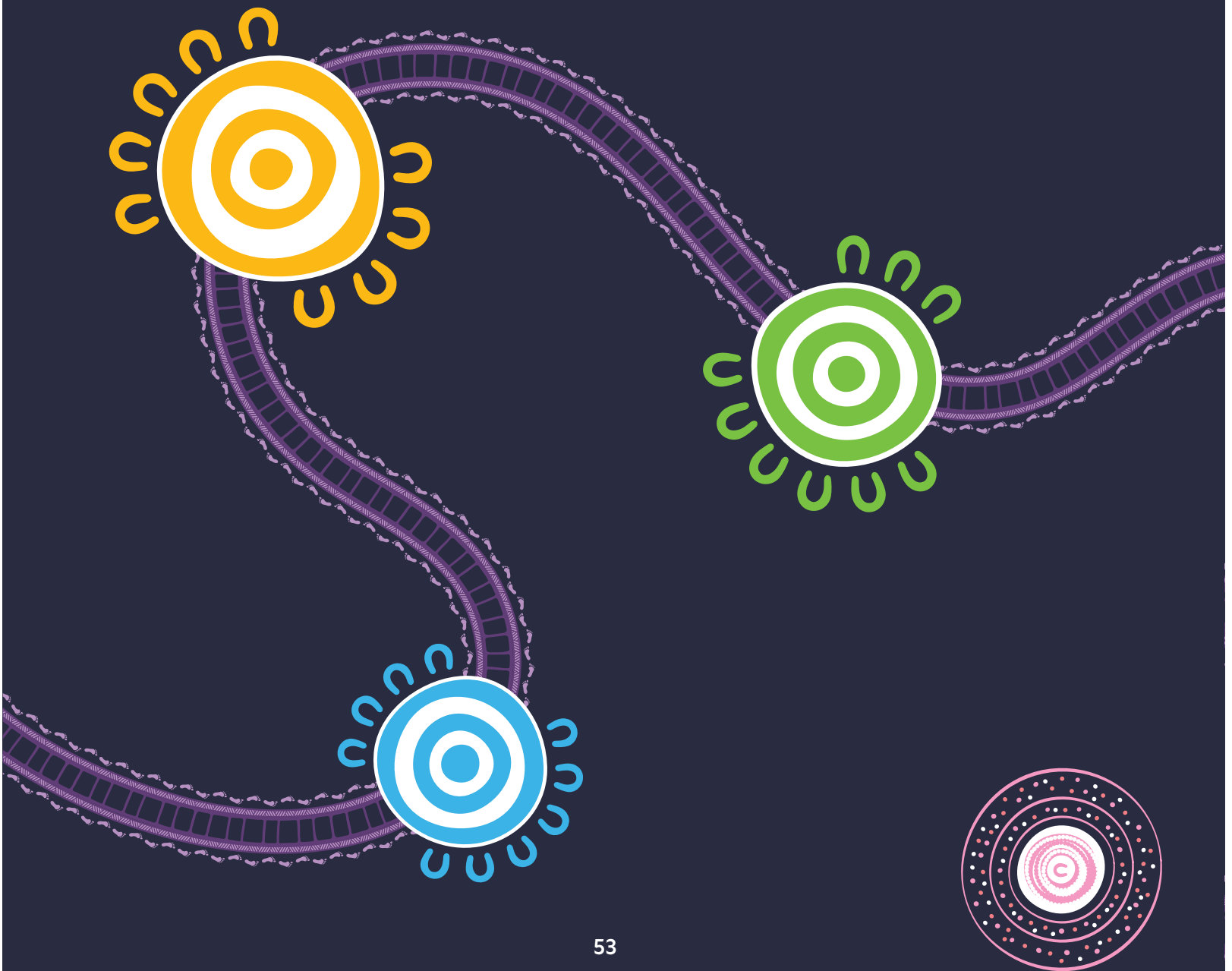
Further detail on Safe and Supported governance, including a description of all governance bodies, is provided in the Safe and Supported First Action Plan.

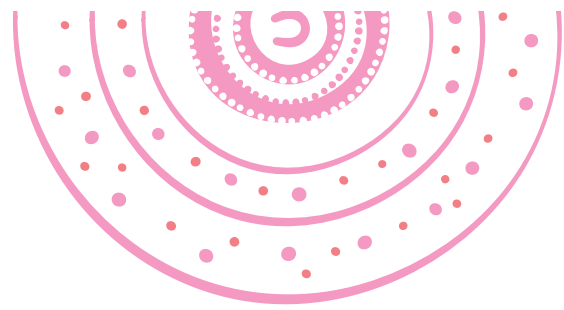
# Governance structure



\*Joint decision making with governments consistent with a formal agreement to fulfil commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap clauses 32 & 33.  
\*\*Comprises inter-jurisdictional government, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, National Coalition and subject-matter expertise.  
\*\*\*These groups will be engaged strategically by governance bodies  
**Note:** box sizes do not reflect the relative size of groups nor their significance.

# How will we measure progress?





# Monitoring, reporting and evaluation

**Progress will be assessed through regular monitoring and reporting under the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy. This will include tracking and publicly reporting progress against the outcomes set out in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outcomes Framework and the Safe and Supported Outcomes Framework. Monitoring and reporting includes existing mechanisms such as Closing the Gap reporting, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Child Protection Australia reporting and the Productivity Commission's Report on Government Services. Public reporting will support accountability and transparency.**

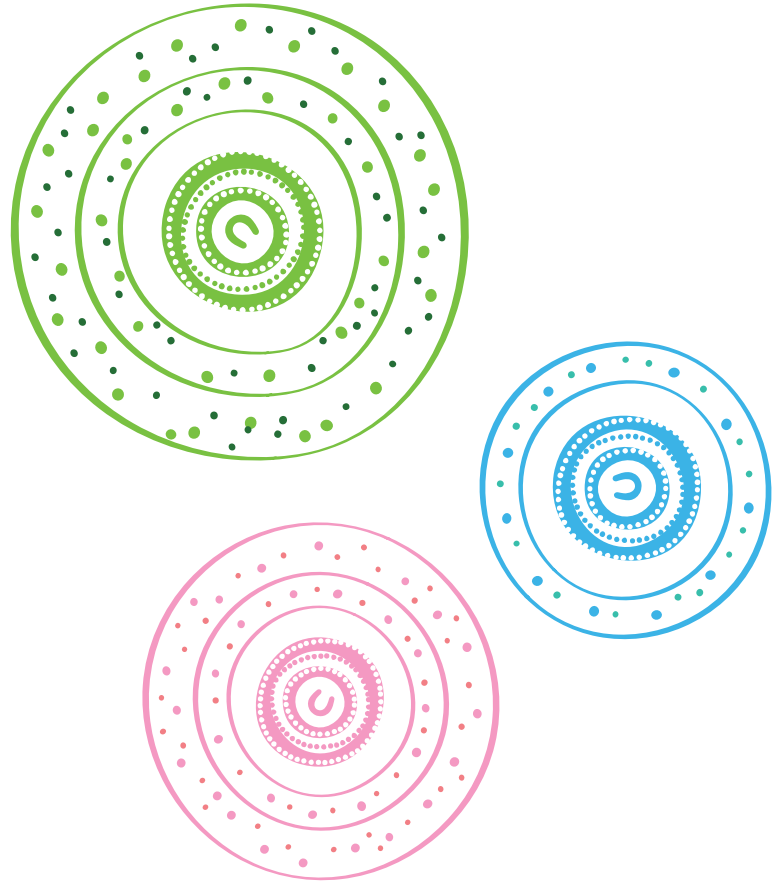
It will be important to hear feedback directly from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families about how we are doing. The Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy will incorporate their voices into

evaluations. This, in turn, will help us to adjust our approach as needed over the next 10 years. These voices will also inform future efforts to support improved safety and wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities across Australia.

A mixed methods approach will be used to monitor and evaluate progress. This will supplement quantitative data with more detailed story-telling and analysis to provide a fuller picture of progress. It will also help address existing data gaps so that progress can be measured for all outcomes. Indicators will continue to be reviewed and refined over the life of Safe and Supported as work continues to improve data and links between datasets.

Finally, the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy will include a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of measuring success. This will help ensure the effects of Safe and Supported on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – children, young people, families, communities and organisations – are reflected accurately and in full accordance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outcomes Framework, rather than in terms set by governments alone. It will also support the principles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Data Sovereignty and Governance in ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations lead the development and reporting of indicators reflecting children's and young people's safety, wellbeing, and connection to family, kin, culture and Country.





## References

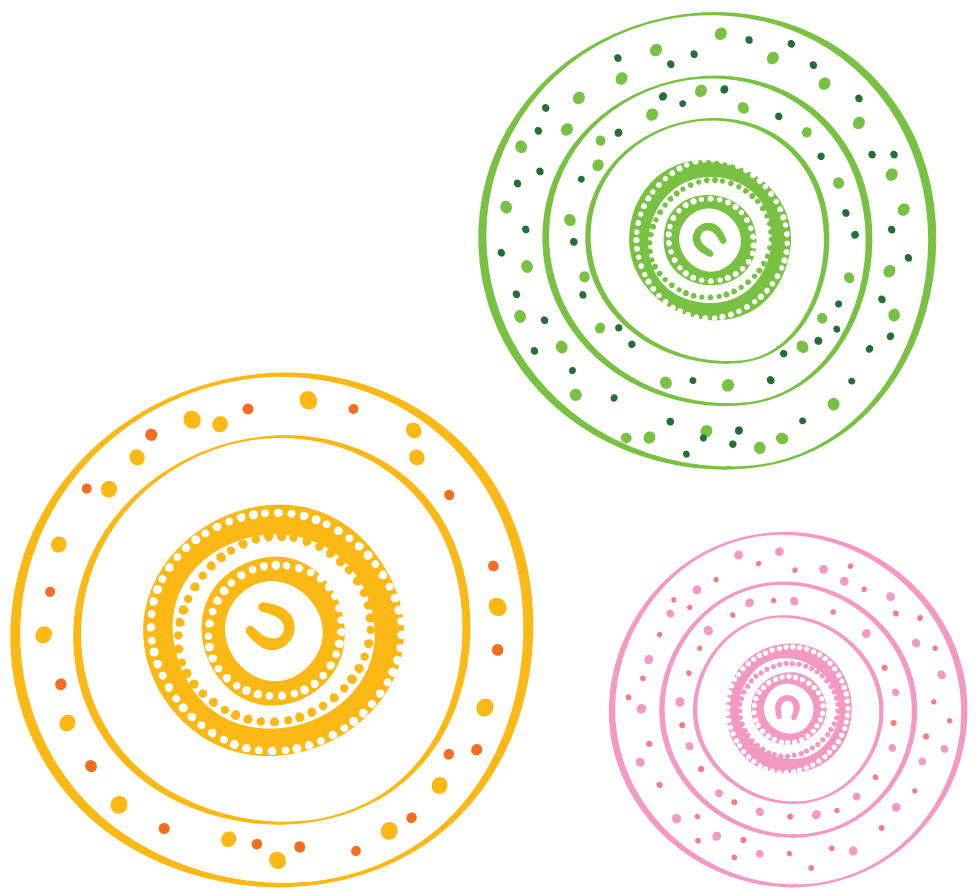
Australian Human Rights Commission (2021) [Keeping Kids Safe and Well - Your Voices](#)

SNAICC (2021) [National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031 Successor Plan Consultation Report](#)

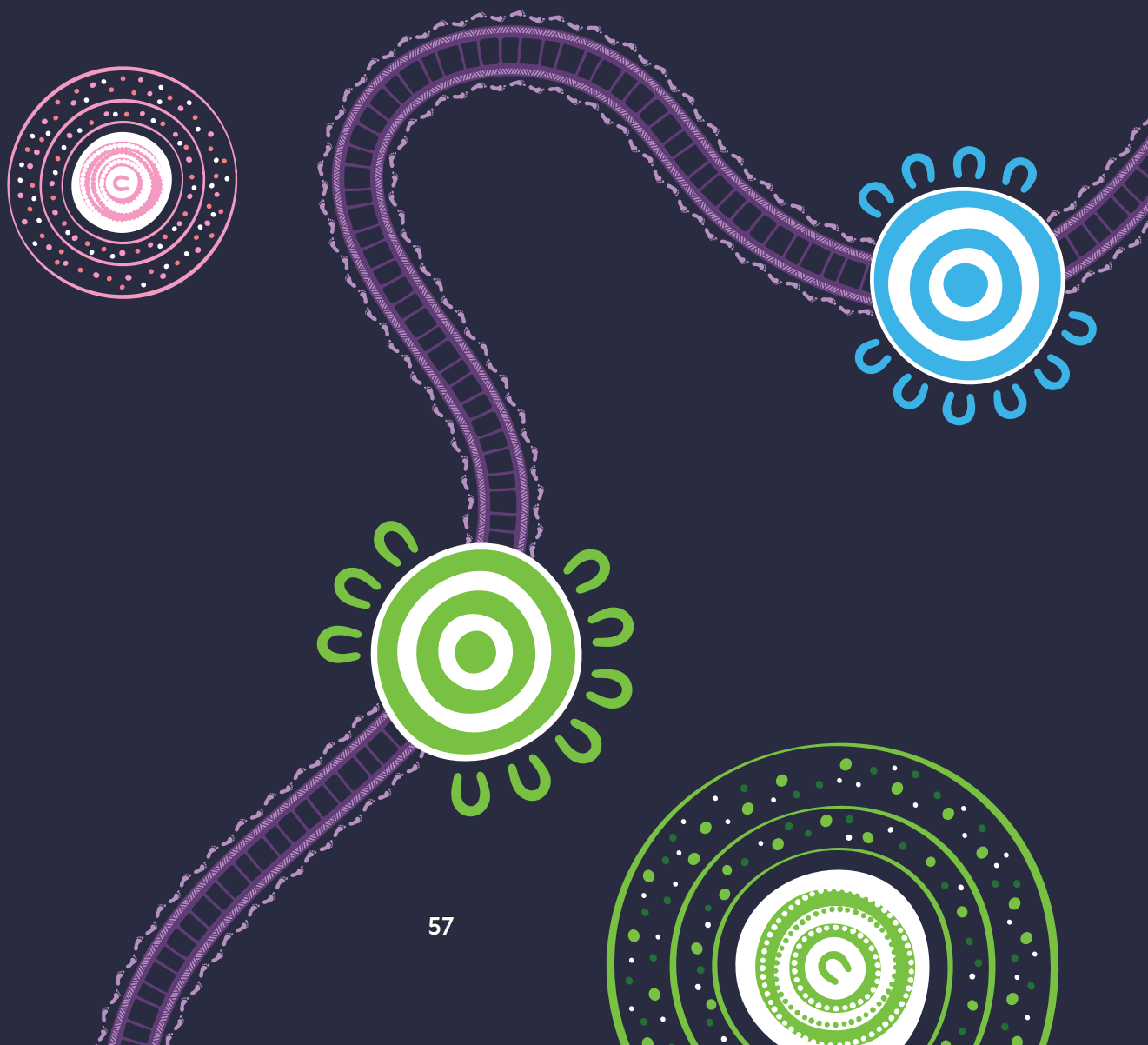
United Nations (2007) [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), GA Res 61/295, UNGAOR, 61st sess, 107th plen mtg, Supp No 49, UN Doc A/RES/61/295 (2 October 2007, adopted 13 September 2007).

United Nations (1993) [Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions \(The Paris Principles\)](#), General Assembly Resolution 48/134





# Appendices



# Appendix A: Other National Initiatives

Safe and Supported will align with other national initiatives that support children, young people and families to be safe. The Australian, state and territory governments are working together so that actions are aligned and do not duplicate effort. We will achieve this through Safe and Supported's governance structure and monitoring and evaluation strategy. Key national initiatives relating to Safe and Supported include the following, noting this is not an exhaustive list.

## **Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031**

*Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031* (the Strategy) was developed by all levels of government together with people with disability, their families, carers and representatives. The Strategy will drive change over the next decade to uphold the rights, inclusion and participation of people with disability in all areas of Australian life. It is based around 7 outcome areas that people with disability identified as important to them: employment and financial security; inclusive homes and communities; safety, rights and justice; personal and community support; education and learning; health and wellbeing; and community attitudes.

## **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy**

The strategy's vision is that 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (0–5 years) are born and remain healthy, nurtured by strong families and enabled to thrive in their early years'. The strategy will aim to address outcomes across all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young children's lives. This includes early learning, health, disability, wellbeing, care and development.

## **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021–2031**

The plan's vision is that 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy long, healthy lives centred in culture, with access to services that are prevention focused, culturally safe and responsive, equitable and free of racism'. The plan recognises that all health and wellbeing approaches must include the following foundations for a healthy life:

- holistic health and wellbeing
- the cultural determinants of health
- the social determinants of health
- a life course approach, including a focus on healthy babies and children and healthy youth and adolescents.

## National Action Plan for the Health of Children and Young People 2020–2030

The Action Plan’s vision is that all Australian children and young people, from all backgrounds and all walks of life, have the same opportunities to fulfil their potential and are healthy, safe and thriving. It aims to drive improvement in the health of all children and young people across their life course, including children and young people who experience violence and abuse and children in out-of-home care.

## National Agreement on Closing the Gap

The National Agreement aims to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and government to work together to overcome the inequality experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It aims to enable them to achieve life outcomes equal to all Australians. This includes outcomes in education, languages, employment, health, wellbeing, safety, land and waters.

## Closing the Gap Sector Strengthening Plans

Under Clause 49 of Closing the Gap, all Australian governments have committed to identifying sectors for joint national strengthening efforts every 3 years through Sector Strengthening Plans. This is in line with Priority Reform 2 (Building the community-controlled sector).

The Early Childhood Care and Development Sector Strengthening Plan focuses on building the community-controlled sectors that address:

- early childhood education and care and integrated supports to children and families to support child development

- child protection and family support services that focus on the needs of children and families experiencing vulnerability and/or who are in contact with child protection systems.

The plan also considers the intersection of these services with other priority sectors for strengthening to be addressed in other plans, including health, housing and disability.

The Disability Sector Strengthening Plan aims to strengthen the community-controlled disability sector, both within the disability service system and across all service systems, and to improve outcomes for, and the rights of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability.

## Closing the Gap Policy Partnerships

Under Clause 38 of Closing the Gap, all Australian governments committed to establishing formal policy partnerships by 2022. Policy Partnerships are a commitment under Priority Reform 1 (Partnership and shared decision-making) and their overall purpose is to develop joined-up advice on 5 priority areas. Policy partnerships include the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership, the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Policy Partnership and the Justice Policy Partnership.

## National Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

This Strategy provides a framework to guide investment in the mental health and wellbeing of children and families. The Strategy outlines the requirements for an effective system of care for children and seeks to create a new, shared understanding of the roles of families, communities, services and educators in promoting and supporting child mental health and wellbeing.

## **National Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Strategic Action Plan 2018–2028**

The Strategic Action Plan aims to reduce the prevalence of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) and its impact on individuals, families, carers and communities. It provides a clear pathway of priorities and opportunities to improve the prevention, diagnosis, support and management of FASD in Australia.

## **National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032**

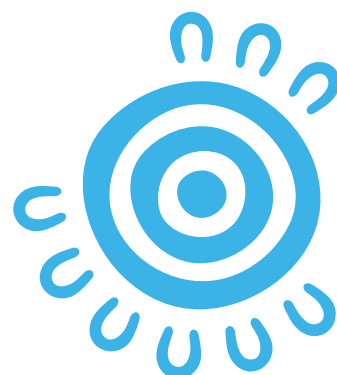
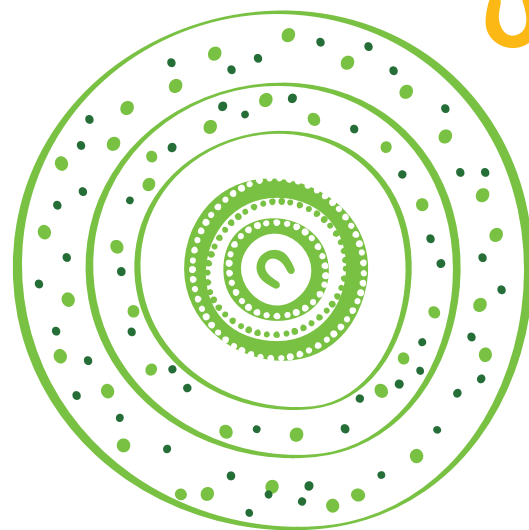
This National Plan is our commitment to a country free of gender-based violence – where all people live free from fear and violence and are safe at home, at work, at school, in the community and online. This is a human right for all people and we commit to ending violence against women and children in Australia in one generation.

## **National Strategic Framework for Information Sharing between the Family Law and Family Violence and Child Protection Systems**

This Framework, endorsed in November 2021, provides a high-level commitment to nationally consistent sharing of family violence and child safety information between the federal family law courts and state and territory courts, child protection, police and firearms agencies. The Framework will complement and build on existing information sharing through the co-location of child protection and policing officials in family law registries across Australia.

## **National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030**

This Strategy aims to ensure children and young people in Australia are protected and safe from sexual abuse in all settings and that victims and survivors of child sexual abuse are supported and empowered. The National Strategy will reduce the risk, extent and impact of child sexual abuse and related harms in Australia and online.



# Appendix B: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Story of Change

## Our starting point...

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities have successfully provided love and care for their children, growing them up strong and safe in culture, for thousands of generations. It is well-recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child-rearing practices, including kinship and community systems, play major roles in the creation of safe and nurturing environments for the holistic care of children and young people (Lohoar, Butera and Kennedy 2014).

## What do children and young people need for wellbeing?

The wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people is a complex and holistic combination of many factors that are often described by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as being deeply and inextricably interconnected (Butler et al. 2019). Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people exist in many diverse nations, cultures and language groups, with many perspectives – meaning that not all families and communities will share the exact same concepts of wellbeing.

However, while specific concepts of wellbeing do vary between nations and communities, a common element of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews is a holistic and collectivist philosophy that sees the wellbeing of a person's surrounding community as indivisible from one's own individual needs (Garvey et al. 2021). This means that the wellbeing of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander child or young person depends not only on the fulfilment of their needs and rights, but also on those of their family and community.

This is closely related to the essential roles that connectedness to Country, family and kinship (including those beyond immediate blood relations), cultural knowledge and social networks play in the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Kilcullen et al. 2016). In other words, having healthy families and safe communities – in environments that enable self-determination, teaching of culture and connection to Country – leads to healthy and safe children.

Over several decades, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, academics and organisations have developed a range of models to conceptualise the wellbeing of children and young people (including as a cohort within overarching models of wellbeing for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people). Prominent examples include those developed by Gee et al. (2014); Waminda – South Coast Women's Health and Welfare Aboriginal Corporation (see Bulloch et al. 2019); Winangali and Inside Policy (2019) for the Queensland Government's *Our Way: A Generational Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families*; The Healing Foundation and Emerging Minds (2020); and the *Mayi Kuwayu: National Study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing* research collective (2018–2022).

This work has identified a range of overarching areas of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's lives that impact on their wellbeing. Examples include physical,

emotional, social and spiritual health; home and environment; learning and skills; and empowerment and autonomy. All of these areas have at their core an essential precondition of connection to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kin, culture and Country. With these areas being deeply interconnected, strengths or challenges in one area are very likely to affect another. In other words, all areas are crucial to families' ability to meet children's holistic needs and prevent child abuse and neglect.

These areas are affected by the social determinants of health and/or wellbeing – meaning the physical, environmental, social and economic conditions in which children, young people and families live and grow that impact their holistic wellbeing. In turn, the social determinants of wellbeing are affected

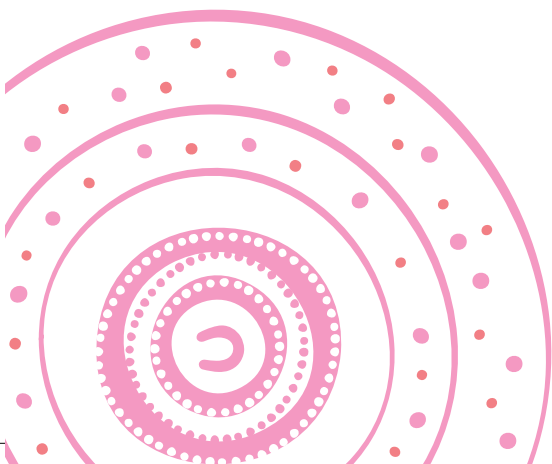
by structural issues within systems, services and broader society that create enablers or barriers to families' opportunities. For this reason, these structural factors (including discrimination, such as systemic racism; limited or inequitable access to services; and poor service design) are highly influential in bringing about risk factors for, or weakening protective factors against, child abuse or neglect.

Evidence indicates that the self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people *collectively* also plays a critical role in the wellbeing of *individual* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities via the 'political determinants of health and wellbeing'. Box 1 provides more detail about what self-determination entails.

### Box 1: What does self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people entail?

Self-determination is the overarching right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to exercise ongoing control over the decisions that affect their lives. As set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples (2007), it includes the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to exercise autonomy in their own affairs and to maintain and strengthen distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions. Self-determination requires the realisation of full empowerment to participate in public decision-making. Subsidiary rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people include:

- the free determination of their political status
- the free pursuit of economic, social and cultural development
- autonomy and self-governance in internal and local affairs
- ways and means for financing their autonomous functions.





## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families continue to experience the effects of colonisation on their wellbeing

Despite the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in relation to child-rearing (see Box 2), and thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' dedicated efforts to support and care for children, some families find themselves under a level of strain that can affect children's development and wellbeing. The challenges facing some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are linked directly to the systemic racism that has persisted since colonisation and the intergenerational trauma (see Box 3) that it has inflicted.

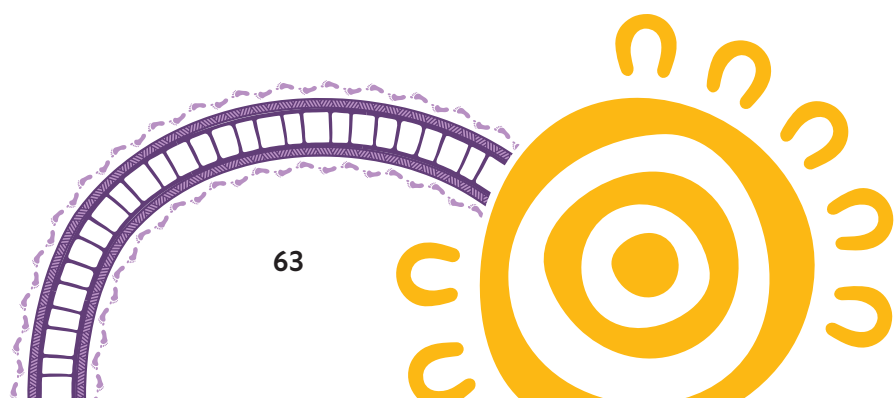
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience racial prejudice at least twice as frequently as non-Indigenous people in Australia, not only during interpersonal interactions with individuals but on an institutional scale – and child protection systems themselves are considered to be rife with systemic racism. Not only does systemic racism cause Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people long-lasting physical and mental harm, it renders services ineffective and culturally unsafe, results in unfair and unjust outcomes, and hampers the development of decision-making structures that include and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations.

### Box 2: The role of culture in growing up Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

Culture permeates all aspects of a person's life. It is often a source of strength and protection, with connection to culture underpinning a sense of identity, resilience and self-esteem by grounding a person's perception of their place in the world.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are among the oldest continuing cultures on the planet. They are highly diverse between different nations, cultural and language groups, and Countries across Australia. However, they have in common an intimate connection with family, spirituality, land and nature; they also involve deeply held traditions and systems of nurturing care for children that have been successful in supporting children to thrive for tens of thousands of years.

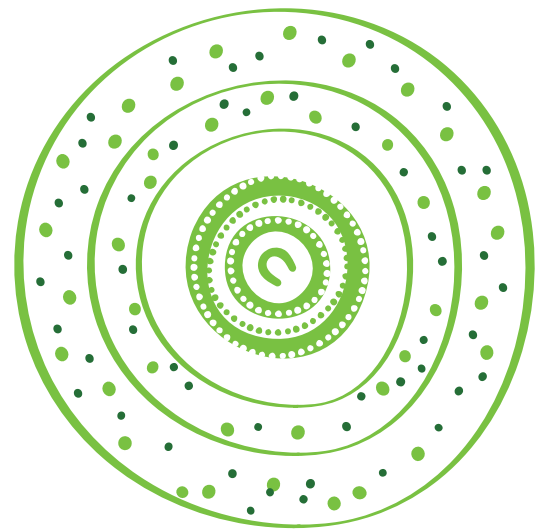
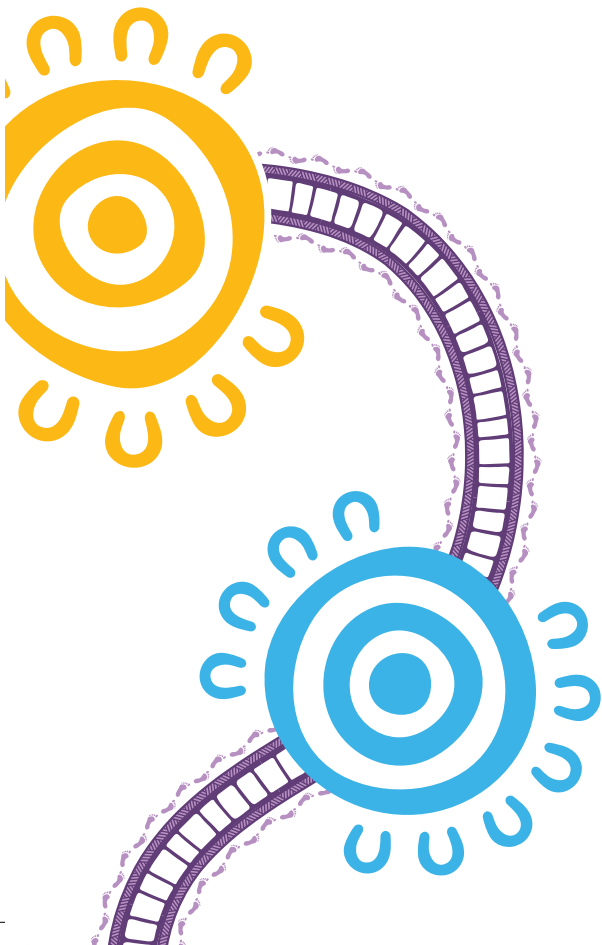
Since colonisation began, racially prejudiced Western systems have attempted to eradicate and replace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. One particularly long-running strategy in this undertaking has been to frame Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures as illegitimate and dangerous risk factors that prevent children's inclusion in broader Australian society and harm their development. Consequently, in efforts to eradicate these cultures, many children have been forcibly removed from their families and their ancestral lands, forbidden to speak their languages or practise their core traditions.



Along with the damage brought about by interpersonal and systemic racism in the present day, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children are also forced to reckon with the harmful structural impacts of colonisation and the systemic disempowerment that ensued for well over 200 years. The institutions of colonisation – many of which continue to exist to this day – actively sought to block Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from having agency, resources and access to public services, as well as denying communities self-determination and their right to autonomy and self-governance. Besides forcing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families into significantly higher levels of poverty and socioeconomic disadvantage than non-Indigenous families, the effects of this oppression have created several other unacceptable barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities being able to grow their children up in the protective environments of family, community and culture. Some of these barriers – including trauma and poverty – can become intergenerational (that is, passed between multiple generations of a family or community;

see Box 3) if they are not addressed by a whole-of-society response. Governments, service providers and non-Indigenous communities must all acknowledge their roles in the harms that have been (and continue to be) perpetrated against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, and commit to redressing those harms by supporting families to heal together with their children.

For example, settler-colonial governments and religious institutions made extensive efforts to disrupt the intergenerational transmission of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, networks of family/kin/community and connection to Country. One of the most significant and traumatic ways of doing this was the widespread removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, carried out for more than a century under government policies described as ‘protection’ and intended to force children to assimilate into the European settler-colonial system. The hundreds of thousands of people who were removed from their families under these policies are now known collectively as the Stolen Generations.



### Box 3: What is intergenerational trauma?

Trauma refers to experiences of, and reactions to, a terrible event or series of events. Trauma can arise from direct and indirect experiences and can affect both individual people and whole communities. Examples of traumatic events include violence or threats of violence, abuse, neglect, forced family separation and adverse childhood experiences. It is estimated that a significant proportion of the Australian population has or will experience trauma at some point in their lives (AIHW 2022).

How a person responds to trauma can depend on their age and circumstances. Trauma can affect the way people think and act, and may overwhelm their ability to cope and engage. Some people experiencing trauma can heal from its impacts; however, healing takes time, and is often a lifelong process. The ways in which people may heal include developing coping mechanisms and drawing on their support systems.

Trauma can continue to affect a person for many decades. When it is unknowingly passed down from a person who has experienced it to their descendants, it is referred to as **intergenerational trauma**. Intergenerational trauma may be transmitted through a trauma survivor's behaviours, their interpretations of the world and/or the trauma's physiological and psychological impacts on them.

The impacts of trauma vary but can include increased substance use/addiction, relationship breakdown, poor mental health and physical or emotional violence. In this way, trauma can contribute to intergenerational cycles of child abuse, neglect and/or engagement with child protection systems (Chamberlain et al. 2019). Most children and young people who experience child abuse and/or neglect do not go on to perpetrate it in adulthood. However, some may become involved in child protection systems as a parent due to the impacts of trauma (Butler and Cockburn 2017). This can be compounded by other impacts of involvement with child protection systems, including economic disadvantage and barriers to support created by experiences of stigma (McDowall 2020).

In Australia, it is also important to recognise that inappropriate and inadequate responses from child protection systems can (and do) cause trauma for children, young people and families. The trauma resulting from the forced removal of children significantly affects the lives of many Stolen Generations descendants and their communities – indeed, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's knowledge of the tragic consequences of the Stolen Generations constitute a near-universal experience of collective trauma. Individual Stolen Generations survivors might also pass on the impacts of institutionalisation, finding it difficult to know how to nurture their children because they were denied the opportunity to be nurtured themselves.

Children may experience difficulties with attachment, disconnection from their extended families and culture, and high levels of stress from family and community members who are dealing with the impacts of trauma. This can create developmental issues for children, who are particularly susceptible to distress at a young age. This reinforces a cycle of trauma, with the impact passed from one generation to the next.

Evidence indicates that the physical, psychological and emotional trauma suffered by the Stolen Generations continues to have widespread and harmful effects on the wellbeing of their descendants and community members in the present day, with these effects linked to many risk factors for child protection involvement (AIHW 2018, 2019, 2021; The Healing Foundation 2021). In particular, social marginalisation and disconnection from cultural practices have caused enduring hurt to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's identity and sense of belonging to family and community. These harms can have long-lasting impacts on the development of children by affecting the connections to family, community, culture and Country that children need in order to thrive.

In consultations for the development of Safe and Supported, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families testified that they could not reach out to services for help with their physical, environmental, financial, mental or emotional needs without being judged as neglectful, abusive or unfit to care for children. Instead of receiving early, prevention-focused and trauma-informed supports, these parents and carers find themselves facing the removal of their children by racially biased and crisis-driven systems that punish families for seeking help.

The outcomes delivered by child protection systems across Australia are alarmingly poor for many children, young people and families, and are achieved at significant and increasing financial and human cost. If transformative change is not achieved, these traumatic processes will continue to separate families and perpetuate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection systems.

This was not the starting point for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families throughout history, but it is the starting point with which governments, service systems and communities now must reckon. Previous efforts at reforming child and family wellbeing systems to better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families have largely been designed by non-Indigenous people, based on non-Indigenous philosophies and practices, and as a result have been generally unsuccessful. Non-Indigenous, assimilationist worldviews cannot continue to dominate decisions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, or to be imposed forcefully on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities without regard to their inherent right to self-determination and self-governance.

## The changes we want to see

All parts of the policy and service system need to work together ...

While Safe and Supported is focused on addressing child abuse and neglect, holistic wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children will require a cross-disciplinary approach from governments and service sectors due to the interlinked nature of children's and families' needs. Academic literature indicates that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's deeply interwoven and connected conception of wellbeing is rarely, if ever, recognised or acknowledged by governments and institutions that provide public services. This has been regarded as a major impediment to the success of policies and programs intended to support the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Garvey et al. 2021).

Safe and Supported must connect with other policy areas like housing, health and education, which have traditionally sat outside the space of child protection but are acknowledged as contributing significantly to the social determinants of wellbeing. Strong collaboration across these different areas is essential for an effective, holistic response to child abuse and neglect and its intergenerational impacts. The delivery of supports must be child-focused – driven by the needs of children, rather than by the processes of government silos or service providers. These efforts will form a key foundation upon which change across the 4 areas of work outlined below can be achieved.

Safe and Supported recognises that child abuse and neglect can be prevented by improving the wellbeing of children, young people and families – especially those experiencing vulnerabilities – across the wide range of social determinants that underpin safe and healthy child development. It also aims to reduce the intergenerational impacts of child abuse and neglect by supporting children, young people and families to heal from their traumas, including intergenerational

trauma. To do this, it will be essential that all stakeholders invest in the healing, strengthening and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities across every stage of children’s lives. By upholding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and decision-making processes, and ensuring that families and communities are equipped with the tools they need to ensure children thrive, we will protect future generations from the devastating effects of child abuse and neglect and will prevent children’s removal from their families, community, culture and Country.

### Priority areas of work for system reform

There are 4 key areas in which change must be achieved if we are to significantly improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families in the long term. These changes entail systemic reform, not merely the introduction of new policies or programs. While these areas of work are interdependent, requiring a holistic approach, they can be grouped into 2 overarching streams (as shown below).

<b>Culturally safe and prevention-focused service systems</b>	<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander systems leadership</b>
Improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families’ access to quality, culturally safe, universal and targeted services necessary for children to thrive	Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities to participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children
Reshaping legislation, policies, programs and practices in child and family welfare to be culturally safe and responsive for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	Making child protection systems and service providers accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, communities and organisations

These 4 areas are based on the 4 Building Blocks developed by the Family Matters Campaign – Australia’s national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led campaign to end the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care. The Family Matters Building Blocks are designed on the basis of extensive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and experience in child development, wellbeing and safety. Importantly, work under all 4 of these areas will also address the other 3 focus areas set out in Safe and Supported.

### **Improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families’ access to quality, culturally safe, universal and targeted services necessary for children to thrive**

As explained above, the socioeconomic disadvantage experienced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families acts as a barrier to engaging with a wide range of services and supports that help children to grow up strong, safe and healthy. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children must therefore be provided with the opportunity to thrive on an equal basis as others by progressing the holistic realisation of their rights, including their rights to safety, family, housing, nutrition, health, education, culture and participation. This move towards prevention of (and early intervention into) disadvantage is closely aligned with Focus Area 1 of Safe and Supported – A national approach to early intervention and targeted support for children and families experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage.

Service systems must also address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families’ unique needs for healing supports to counteract the impacts of intergenerational trauma. Further, it is crucial that service systems do not reinforce trauma in the way they deliver services to clients, but focus on providing

safe, culturally responsive supports that are tailored to families’ strengths. By empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families with the agency and resources to fulfil their holistic needs, this transformation will give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children the best chance to grow up strong in their own families, communities and cultures.

Achieving this will require the restoration of First Nations’ authority in child protection systems design and administration, service provision and practice, along with active investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led approaches to delivering services. This is a key advantage of ACCOs, which are best placed to provide culturally competent services attuned to the needs of their communities. The Australian, state and territory governments have acknowledged this advantage in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (Closing the Gap) and committed to growing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector in Priority Reform 2.

For progress under Safe and Supported to align with this commitment, it will be essential that governments invest in the growth of ACCOs in the child and family wellbeing sector so that they can expand their supports to children, young people and families. These investments must provide a sustainable level of funding that reflects the identified needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families, and that does not place unreasonable reporting burdens on the funded ACCOs. Further, governments and non-Indigenous service providers must actively prepare for ACCOs to take over service delivery for current clients. These changes will also constitute a key area of work under Focus Area 4 of Safe and Supported – Strengthening the child and family sector and workforce capability.



### **Proposed 10-Year Outcomes**

- Child and Family-level: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families know they can easily access the services and supports they need, that those services will be safe and respectful of their cultures, and that they will be trauma-informed, child-centred and family-focused.
- System-level: High-quality child and family wellbeing services are designed and delivered by ACCOs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families, in line with families' needs, and focus on supporting families to stay safe together.

### **Reshaping legislation, policies, programs and practices in child and family welfare to be culturally safe and responsive for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people**

Eliminating the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection systems will require the redirection of those systems from a Western model that sees Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of being as 'abnormal' towards one that equally respects, centres and responds to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander concepts of wellbeing and child-rearing practices. Systems and programs are far more likely to be successful when they are designed to target the specific needs and priorities of the populations they serve, rather than aiming to squeeze each unique population into the same homogeneous parameters.

Achieving cultural safety and responsiveness in law, policy and practice will require:

- legislation, policy and practice models that fully embed the 5 elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP), using a rights-based approach
- an environment that enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to exercise their right to self-determination, via the recognition, elevation and resourcing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community governance structures
- the assembly of frameworks and methodologies designed and delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to benefit their children, which Aboriginal and Torres Strait people can choose to use and which are delivered according to the need to achieve equitable outcomes
- the corresponding removal of frameworks and methodologies that discriminate against and harm Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children
- the ongoing development of cultural competence across the broader child and family service sectors (as a key element of Focus Area 4 of Safe and Supported).

The first point, in particular, is also closely aligned with Focus Area 1 of Safe and Supported in that the 'Prevention' element of the ATSICPP strives to protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's rights to grow up in family, community and culture by redressing the causes of child protection intervention and supporting families to combat vulnerabilities together.



## What is the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle?

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) was designed to recognise the importance of safe care within family and culture to the best interests of children, and to ensure that the actions that caused the Stolen Generations are not repeated (SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children 2017). Its elements span all parts of the child protection system: from prevention of entry to out-of-home care, through to restoring children to their families from out-of-home care, to ensuring culturally connected placements and enabling the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities in child protection decision-making.

### Proposed 10-Year Outcomes

- Child and Family-level: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families in contact with child protection systems have their cultural needs (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child-rearing practices) and kinship networks supported. Their right to make decisions about their own lives, within their unique cultural parameters, is recognised.
- System-level: Child protection systems and services uphold children's and young people's rights to their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities and the wellbeing needs arising from those identities, including self-determination and connections to family, community, Country and culture.

### Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities to participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children

The ability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to exercise authority in decisions that affect them is not only a core human right (United Nations Human Rights Council Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2010, 2021), but is critical to decision-making that is informed by a cultural understanding of the context,

wellbeing and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The tragic outcomes of culturally exclusive decision-making acknowledged in the *Bringing them Home* report have shown clearly that decision-making in the best interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is only possible when it is undertaken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, driven by a strong cultural perspective and takes place according to First Nations processes and protocols (SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children 2013).

Self-determination is therefore a fundamental prerequisite for improving the holistic safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities (as well as a human right to which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are inherently entitled, based on their status as the first inhabitants of Australia). It is essential that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are able to exercise agency at all points of contact with the child and family welfare system if we are to address the injustices that were evident in the forced removals of the Stolen Generations, and to ensure those events are never repeated.

Such processes also help to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are accorded the rights articulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – including the right to have agency in decision-making on matters that affect their lives (Article 12) and the right, in community with other members of their group, to enjoy their culture, religion and language (Article 30).

It is important to note that consultation is not self-determination. Engagement in child protection system design and decision-making must extend beyond consultation to the exercise of genuine decision-making power by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled governance bodies in the decisions that are made about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at all stages of child protection engagement, and the opportunity to carry those decisions through to implementation.

Further, for agency to be exercised in line with the right to self-determination, families must be able to partner in decision-making through systems that are established by, and accountable to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled governance bodies. Only then can community-based structures lead locally targeted strategies for the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, using their knowledge and expertise to address the specific needs and priorities of their families.

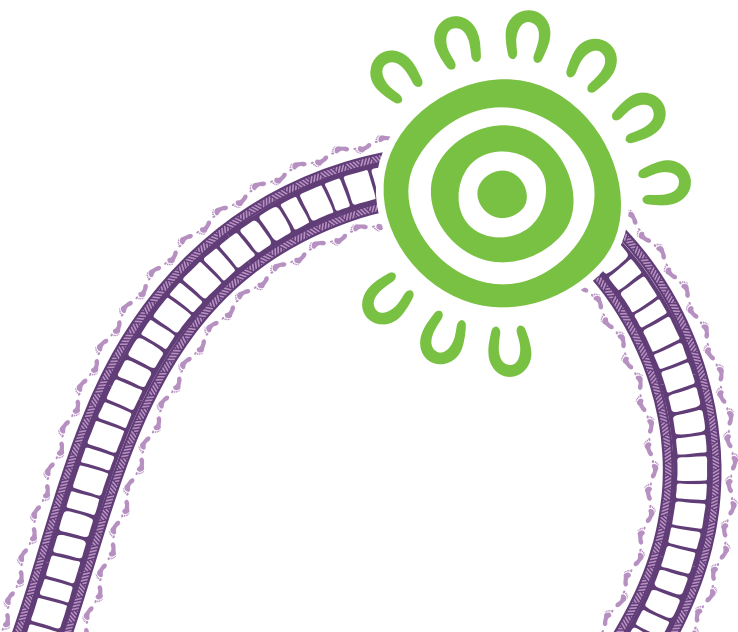
Closing the Gap, which incorporates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's right to self-determination as a key principle, provides comprehensive instruction on how government systems and processes should partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community governance structures to negotiate shared decisions. Under Priority Reform 1 of Closing the Gap, governments across Australia commit to undertake shared decision-making with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and agree that shared decision-making demands (among other elements):

- transparency
- equal access to data
- for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives to be able to speak freely without fear of reprisals or repercussions
- for the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parties to hold as much weight as those of governments.

These elements must be adhered to in the design of child protection policies and programs that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families in order to progress towards the achievement of Closing the Gap's Target 12 – By 2031, reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45 per cent.

### **Proposed 10-Year Outcomes**

- Child and Family-level: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families lead care and protection decision-making for their children (with children and young people involved in all decisions), and participate in policy and program design through their own community leadership and institutions.
- System-level: ACCOs and community leadership have authority in system design and child protection processes. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and evidence drives best practice.



## Making child protection systems and service providers accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, communities and organisations

Efforts to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection systems must include ongoing public measures of accountability and oversight led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including the development of measures of success centred on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews. Accountability is not only a key element of Closing the Gap's Priority Reform 1, as described above, but also of Priority Reform 3 – systemic and structural transformation of mainstream government organisations to improve accountability and respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Further, Priority Reform 4 – shared access to data and information on a regional level – is itself an essential aspect of enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to hold governments accountable. It is also closely aligned with Focus Area 3 of Safe and Supported – Improved information sharing, data development and analysis.

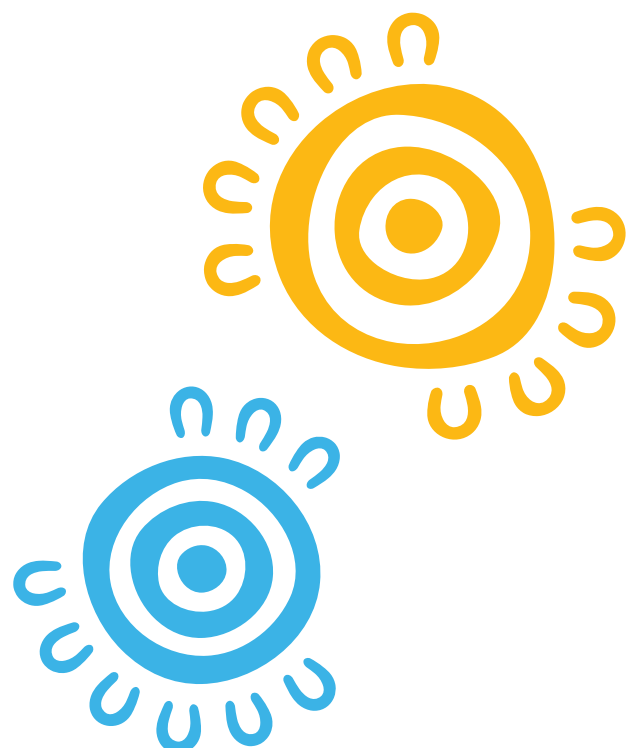
Oversight arrangements must be led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and should enable the reciprocal flow of information between governments and communities. These mechanisms will be crucial in focusing public attention and government decision-making processes in order to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's rights are realised and the most effective, evidence-based strategies are used.

## Proposed 10-Year Outcomes

- Child and Family-level: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families access the information and supports they need to feel confident and empowered engaging with child and family welfare systems.
- System-level: The design, implementation and evaluation of all aspects of child protection systems are continuously overseen by robust Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-designed governance and accountability mechanisms, with governments held genuinely accountable to progress against their commitments.

## What we will do to get there

Putting these systemic reforms into motion will require collective efforts – from governments, service systems, researchers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations throughout Australia – to improve supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families and to facilitate their agency. This will involve every element of services and systems: from the formation of decision-making structures through to the design of legislation and policy, commissioning mechanisms, program implementation and accountability/oversight arrangements.



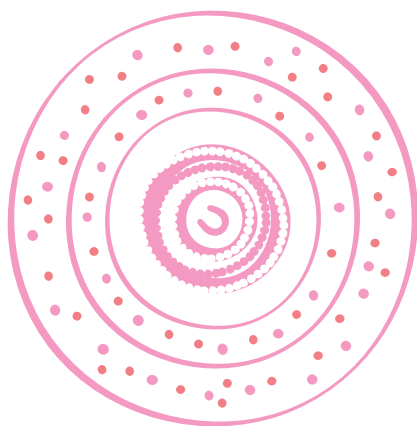
Focus Area 2 of Safe and Supported specifically addresses the need for the Australian, state and territory governments to reduce the factors causing over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care. Governments have committed to placing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination at the centre of transformation efforts under this focus area, including through:

- taking active steps towards families, communities and ACCOs partnering in child protection system design and administration
- reforming relevant legislation and policy with a view to supporting self-determination, fully embedding the 5 elements of the ATSI CPP (and promoting their implementation by identifying and reporting on active efforts), and facilitating the delegation of authority in child protection to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and community-controlled organisations.

Governments have agreed that a priority under this focus area will be to align all activities with the 4 priority reforms of Closing the Gap, as described above. These targeted approaches under Safe and Supported will therefore complement work under the Closing the Gap and focused responses in related policy areas (including the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy*, the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032* and the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030*).

Actions under Safe and Supported will also seek to foster collaboration with other policy and service areas that impact protective and risk factors for child abuse, neglect or child protection engagement. Such actions will look to influence change in these areas and improve understanding of how they impact on family functioning, childhood development and intergenerational resilience.

Led by the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and organisations, this work will ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children can grow up safe, strong in their cultures and connected to their families and communities.



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# Appendix C: Consultation Findings

## Summary of consultations to inform the First Action Plan

### Online public consultation

A summary of the Department of Social Services' DSS Engage consultation report can be found [www.engage.dss.gov.au](http://www.engage.dss.gov.au)

From June 2021 to August 2021, the Australian Government undertook an online public consultation process through Department of Social Services (DSS) Engage to support the implementation of Safe and Supported. Around 650 individual themes were identified through this process, with a number of common key themes identified by a significant number of respondents.

Respondents to this public consultation highlighted workforce competencies as the main area of concern, at double the response of the next highest categories (service collaboration and coordination, and out-of-home care leavers and transitioning). The themes most commonly raised recognise that services are not seen to be centred around service users (children and families) in terms of their design, appropriateness for the communities they serve, how they are delivered or the worker skillsets required. These key themes have informed this Action Plan by identifying priority actions for immediate implementation.

### SNAICC consultation report

The SNAICC *Successor Plan Consultation Report* can be found [www.snaicc.org.au/protecting-australias-children](http://www.snaicc.org.au/protecting-australias-children)

SNAICC conducted a series of consultations to guide the co-design of Safe and Supported and the Action Plan. These consultations were held with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, carers, ACCOs, non-Indigenous organisations and government representatives.

Findings from these consultations included continued frustration from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at the perceived lack of political will to implement actions and to rectify child protection over-representation, lack of government accountability and transparency, and repeated concerns for child protection systems not reflecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural values.<sup>5</sup>

### National Children's Commissioner consultation report

The *Keeping Kids Safe and Well – your voices* Report can be found [www.humanrights.gov.au/safeandwell](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/safeandwell)

Throughout 2021, the National Children's Commissioner, Ms Anne Hollonds, undertook a consultation process to seek the views of children, young people and families across Australia on how to keep children and young people safe and well in their homes and communities. The *Keeping Kids Safe and Well – your voices* report found that the 3 most important services to help children, young people and families to be safe were help with housing, mental health services and basic needs.

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<sup>5</sup> SNAICC – National Voice for our Children (2021) [National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031 Successor Plan Consultation Report](http://www.snaicc.org.au/protecting-australias-children).

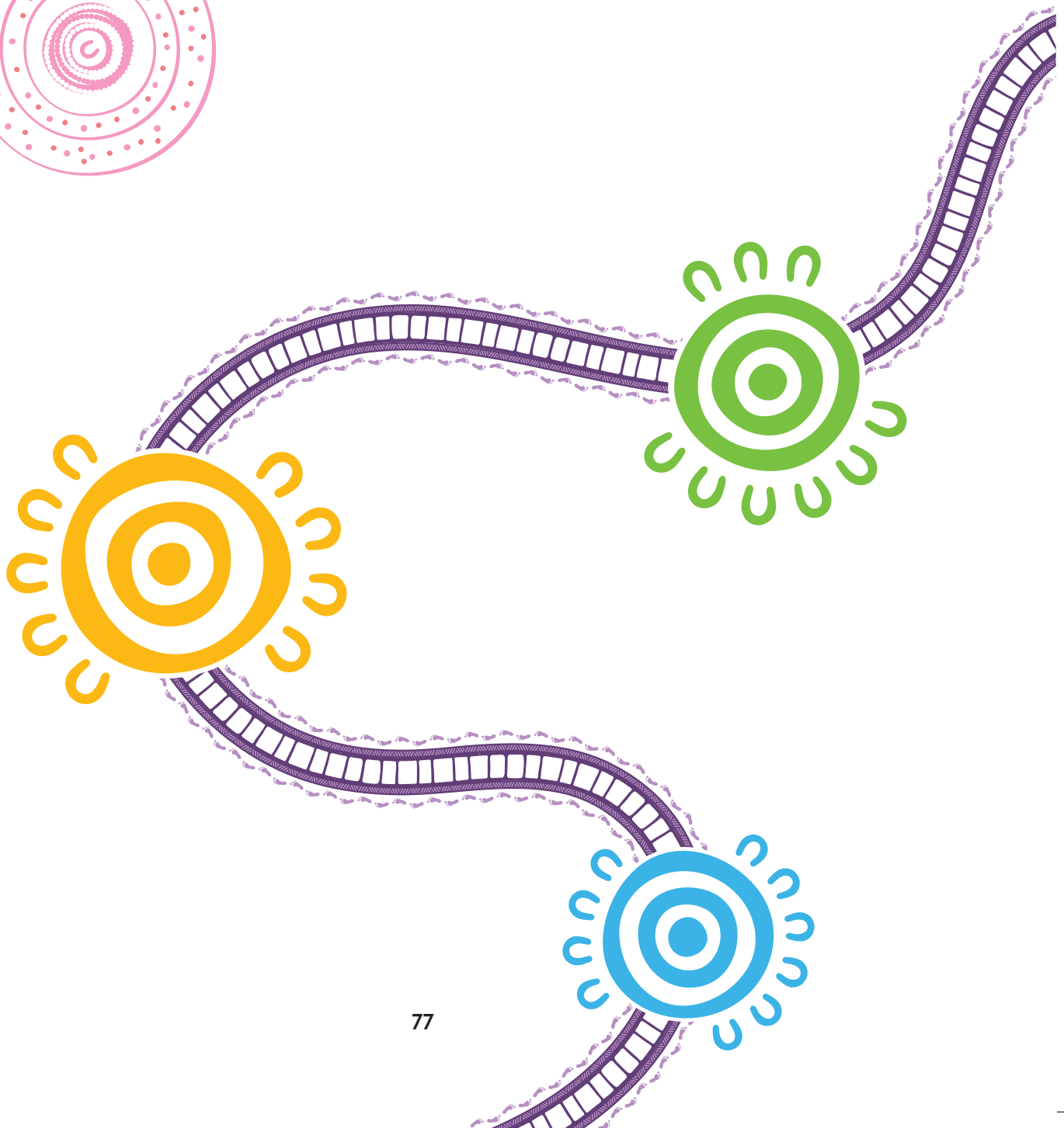
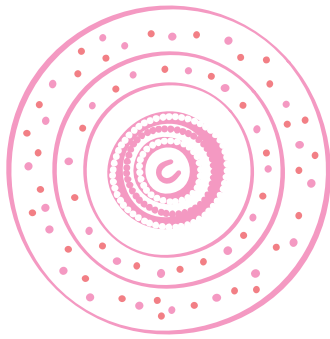


Most of the report's recommendations focus on actions that could support Safe and Supported's Focus Area 1 – 'A national approach to early intervention and targeted support for children and families experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage' – and Focus Area 2 – 'Addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection'.

## Families Australia Beyond 2020 consultation report

The Beyond 2020 Report can be found [www.familiesaustralia.org.au/about/beyond-2020/](http://www.familiesaustralia.org.au/about/beyond-2020/)

In 2019 and early 2020, Families Australia convened nationwide workshops and consultations on the future of national child and family wellbeing policy. Nearly 800 participants from government, non-government, research and community backgrounds as well as young people, carers and families were involved.



# Appendix D: Glossary of key terms

## **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs):**

Community-controlled organisations deliver services that strengthen and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and people and are:

1. Incorporated under relevant legislation and not-for-profit.
2. Controlled and operated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
3. Connected to the community, or communities, in which they deliver services.
4. Governed by a majority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governing body.<sup>6</sup>

**Active efforts:** Active efforts are purposeful, thorough and timely, supported by legislation and/or policy and enable the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Active efforts encompass a variety of strategies to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's connection to family, culture, community and Country is maintained.<sup>7</sup>

**At risk:** Refers to children, young people and families whose circumstances are causing concern for the safety and/or welfare of the child or young person.

**Child abuse and neglect:** The World Health Organization defines child abuse and neglect as 'all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power'.<sup>8</sup>

**Child protection:** Services and systems provided by state and territory departments to assist vulnerable children who are suspected of being abused, neglected or harmed, or whose parents are unable to provide adequate care and protection.

**Children:** Individuals under the age of 18, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.<sup>9</sup>

**Children and families who are experiencing disadvantage and/or are vulnerable:** In the context of Safe and Supported, this refers to a child/family who experience(s) a condition or circumstance that places them at a higher risk of child abuse or neglect when compared to the general population. These conditions/circumstances are those that evidence indicates are related to the risk factors associated with child abuse and neglect.

**Collective effort:** Refers to where the Australian Government and state and territory governments can make an impact through a national approach. This is in contrast to focusing on individual Australian Government or state or territory government reforms.

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6 Closing the Gap (n.d.), *Building the Community-Controlled Sector*.

7 SNAICC – National Voice for our Children (2019) [The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: A Guide to support Implementation](#).

8 World Health Organization (WHO) (2006) [Preventing Child Maltreatment: A Guide to Taking Action and Generating Evidence](#).

9 United Nations (1989) [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#).

**Community-led:** A community-led approach means that a policy or program is supported, developed, delivered and evaluated by, or in consultation with, the community or group that will be impacted by the policy or program.

**Culturally safe:** The term ‘cultural safety’ can be defined as referring to an environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It includes shared respect, shared meaning and shared knowledge and experience of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening. Culturally safe service provision is important across all areas of operation, including governance, workforce and relationships with communities. In the context of child safety, cultural safety includes the child being provided with a safe, nurturing and positive environment in which they are comfortable with being themselves and expressing their culture, spiritual and belief systems and are supported to do so by parents, carers or front-line staff.<sup>10</sup>

**Disability:** People with disability include, but are not restricted to, those who have long-term physical, mental, cognitive, intellectual or sensory impairments. The social model of disability recognises attitudes, practice and structures can be disabling and act as barriers preventing people from fulfilling their potential and exercising their rights as equal members of the community.<sup>11</sup>

**Early intervention:** Safe and Supported uses the terms ‘early intervention’ and ‘early support’ interchangeably.

Early intervention is often used when talking about public health models, which aim to ‘prevent problems occurring in the first place by targeting policies and interventions at the known risk factors for the problem, quickly identifying and responding if they do occur and minimising the long-term effects of the problem’.<sup>12</sup> In child protection, the public health model ranges from primary intervention services that target everyone, to secondary or early intervention services that target families in need, through to tertiary intervention services that target families where abuse and neglect has already occurred.<sup>13</sup>

**Investigation:** The process by which departments gather more information about a child involved in a child protection notification. Staff assess the harm or degree of harm to the child and their protective needs. Investigations may include sighting or interviewing the child where practical.<sup>14</sup>

**Multiple and complex needs:** Families with multiple and complex needs can have differing needs across different family members, such as disability, alcohol and other drug use and mental health concerns. Other risk factors may be present as well, such as domestic and family violence, or a lack of access to suitable housing and employment.

**Notification:** A notification is a report made to a child protection department alleging child abuse/neglect, child maltreatment or harm to a child. These reports can be made by individuals or organisations.<sup>15</sup>

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10 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children and Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (2021), [Keeping Our Kids Safe: Cultural Safety and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. Canberra: Australian Government.](#)

11 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) (2021), [Child protection Australia 2019-20.](#)

12 Australian Institute of Family Studies (2014) [Defining the Public Health Model for the Child Welfare Services Context.](#)

13 AIFS (2014) [Defining the Public Health Model for the Child Welfare Services Context.](#)

14 AIHW (2021) [Child Protection Australia 2019-20.](#)

15 AIHW (2021) [Child Protection Australia 2019-20.](#)

**Out-of-home care:** Generally, out-of-home care is overnight care for children aged under 18 who are unable to live with their families due to child safety concerns. It is a medium or long-term arrangement when there is a high level of risk determined by child protection departments or when parents cannot care for their children for a time.

This includes placements approved by the department responsible for child protection for which there is ongoing case management and financial payment (including where a financial payment has been offered but has been declined by the carer).<sup>16</sup>

**Parties:** Stakeholders involved in Safe and Supported and its implementation, as determined by its governance structure. This includes Australian, state and territory governments, NGOs and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives.

**Trauma-informed:** There is not yet a common definition of a ‘trauma-informed approach’ or ‘trauma-informed care’. Principles of trauma-informed approaches and care include:

- having a sound understanding of the prevalence and nature of trauma and its impacts on people’s development and functioning
- organisational and operational practices promoting the physical, psychological and emotional safety of people who have experienced trauma
- adopting service cultures and practices that empower people in their recovery, by emphasising autonomy, collaboration and strengths-based approaches
- recognising and being responsive to the lived, social and cultural contexts of people, which shape their needs as well as their recovery and healing pathways

- recognising the relational nature of both trauma and healing.

Principles such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s ownership, definition, design and evaluation of healing initiatives, and designing initiatives based on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews rather than Western health understandings alone, are other important considerations. A trauma-informed approach does not necessarily require a service to provide therapeutic treatment addressing the symptoms of trauma.<sup>17</sup>

**Self-determination:** Self-determination is a collective right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to determine and control their own destiny. It is a right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to exercise autonomy in their own affairs and to maintain and strengthen distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions.<sup>18</sup>

**Shared decision-making:** Shared decision-making means that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 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 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have their voices heard, including Elders, young people, women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a disability.<sup>19</sup>

**Strengths-based:** A strengths-based approach recognises, fosters and builds on a person’s skills, capacities and competencies. This approach recognises that each person already has skills and expertise in relation to their lives and their families. A strengths-based approach aims to enhance motivation, participation and realisation of identified goals and positive outcomes.<sup>20</sup>

16 AIHW (2021) [Child Protection Australia 2019–20](#).

17 A Quadara & C Hunter (2016) *Principles of Trauma-Informed Approaches to Child Sexual Abuse: A Discussion Paper*, AIFS.

18 United Nations (2007) [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Resolution / Adopted by the General Assembly](#).

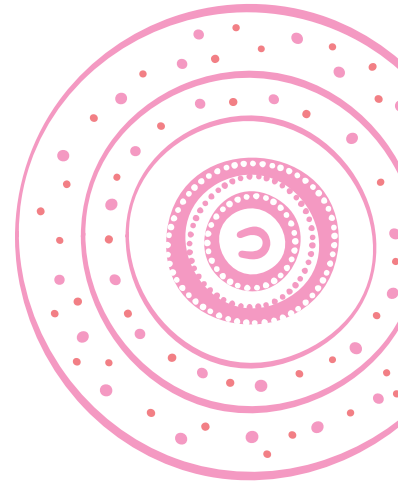
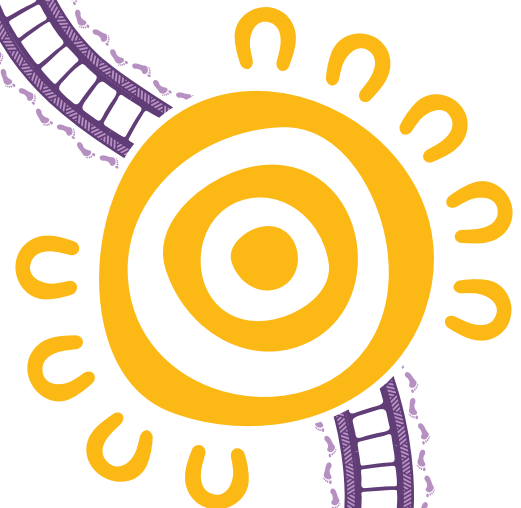
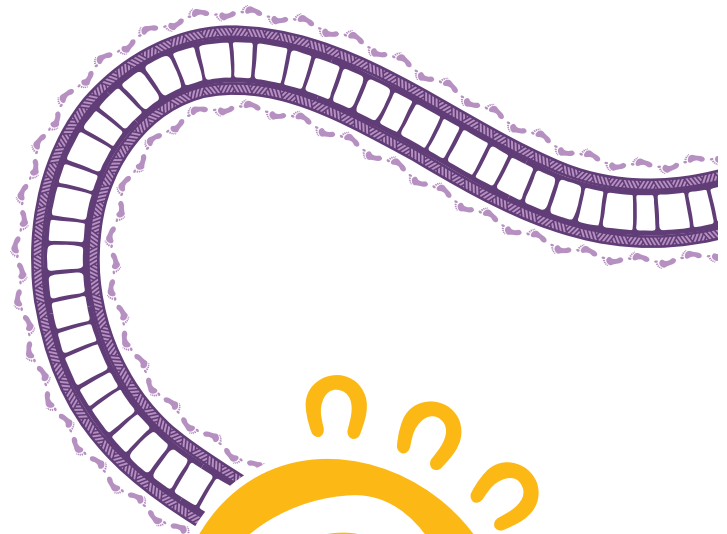
19 Joint Council on Closing the Gap (2020) [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#).

20 NSW Government (2021) [Prevention and Early Intervention Strategies](#).

**Substantiation:** A substantiation is the result of a finalised child protection investigation which concludes that there is reasonable cause to believe that a child has been, is being or is likely to be abused, neglected or otherwise harmed. This may include cases where children have no suitable caregiver.<sup>21</sup>

**Services and systems:** Services are provided by governments or NGOs that aim to better the wellbeing of individuals. Systems are a combination of processes and structures and are made up of numerous components, including agencies and organisations, funding and accountability arrangements.<sup>22</sup> Under Safe and Supported, a systems approach is defined as one that aims to address child abuse and neglect holistically, bringing a greater focus to early supports and strengthening the role of everyone involved in protecting children. This includes governments, NGOs, the community, parents and carers.

**Young people:** Individuals aged between 15 and 24 years, in line with the United Nations' definition. The definition of young people may vary across policies and programs and between states and territories. It often includes individuals up to age 25.



21 AIHW (2021) [Child Protection Australia 2019–20](#).

22 Productivity Commission (2018) [Introducing Competition and Informed User Choice in Human Services](#).

