



Australian
Childhood
Foundation

Strategy 2030

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Acknowledgement

Australian Childhood Foundation acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the land and waters across Australia in which we share. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and to the children who are leaders of tomorrow. We acknowledge the histories and living cultures and the many thousands of years in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have raised their children to be safe and strong. We recognise and accept it is the oldest continuous living culture in the world and that their sovereignty has never been ceded.

We are an inclusive, safe and respectful organisation which celebrates diversity and actively supports the inclusion of children, young people and adults from LGBTIQ+ communities, people with disabilities, people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and people with diverse religious beliefs or affiliations.



Foreword

The Australian Childhood Foundation has been making a difference to the lives of children and young people for 36 years. I am so proud of what we have been able to achieve so far. Our next strategic plan has a much longer time frame as it looks out to 2030. It is ambitious and brings with it a sense of urgency that immediate collective effort is urgently needed to end the trauma of abuse, exploitation and neglect suffered by so many children in Australia each year.

Children and young people are facing dangers like never before. Much of the abuse experienced by children which has remained invisible requires us to re-commit ourselves to tackle it with renewed energy and determination. Children and young people need responses that not only effectively protect them but also resource them to start the patient and delicate process of healing.

Children and young people are also confronted with the overwhelming threat posed by adults who set out to exploit them over the internet and in the digital world. The perpetrators of such violation are hiding in plain sight, taking on identities that lure children into believing their lies and deception. As a community, we must do more now. As a Foundation, we will do more. We will raise awareness about online abuse and exploitation and empower adults to know how to keep children and young people safe.

To our wonderful team at the Foundation, it is your dedication that has kept shining through despite the

enormity of the task. You have been a vital part of our story to date and integral to helping us to deliver this plan.

To our many partners, supporters and peers, we look forward to continuing to work with you to better safeguard, protect and heal children and young people. It will take our concerted and collaborative endeavour to address the very real risks that are endemic in the lives of children and young people.

To communities everywhere, we want you to be confident to take action to keep every child safe from abuse, exploitation and neglect. It is not possible to realise this strategy without joining forces for children, remembering that it is the strength of our relationships with them that gives them what they need to grow with an open heart and an invaluable sense of belonging.

And to children and young people everywhere, it is our most important ambition that you experience your right to safety, family, culture, and education in real and tangible ways. It is our responsibility to give you the kindness and love you need so that your joyfulness lights up all of our lives.

Dr Joe Tucci
CEO
Australian Childhood Foundation



Our children need us



Adults are not adequately prepared to protect children and young people from changing threats.

While there are many dangers to children and young people, it is the dramatic rise in online exploitation and abuse of children and young people which alarms us.

There are 2.88 million registered accounts on ten dark web communities sharing and trading child sexual abuse material. It is estimated that there are approximately 750,000 individuals looking to connect with children and young people with the intent to sexually abuse or exploit them online at any time.

In our own recent research, 71% of children were found to spend more time on the internet on their own. As a result, more than a third of parents were worried about how to best protect them from being exploited. Without knowledge and awareness, adults are not confident about knowing how and when to act to protect children from online abuse and exploitation, leaving them vulnerable and unsafe.

We must empower adults with the knowledge and confidence to act to keep children and young people safe from abuse and exploitation in all the environments within which they interact.



Ending the trauma of child abuse, exploitation and neglect remains outside of community awareness and is not prioritised as a community concern.

Our own research shows that the community lacks all of the building blocks required to prevent child abuse and adequately act to protect children and young people from abuse, exploitation and neglect. They are not aware of the true scale and impact of child abuse. They do not believe that it is as widespread as it really is. They have a shallow understanding of how it is defined, what its components are, how it develops or the level of risk that children and young people face in their own homes. They lack confidence about when, what and why they should take action when exposed to information that children are being abused and neglected. There are still prevailing attitudes that stop them from stepping up to keep children safe. These attitudes have been there for at least eighteen years and they have not changed.

We must deepen community commitment to take action to prevent and respond to child abuse, exploitation and neglect.



Systems for protecting, caring and supporting children and young people from abuse, exploitation and neglect face increasingly complex challenges.

The incidence of child abuse, neglect and family violence continues to increase. The evolving knowledge about trauma highlights the significance of its adverse impacts on the life course of children and young people.

However, child protection and out of home care systems struggle to protect and look after children, leaving many experiencing unstable relationships, inconsistent care and exposed to health and safety risks, including further abuse and exploitation.

There is inadequate investment in locally developed and fit for context therapeutic approaches that support the healing of children and young people from the consequences of trauma.

Systems and practice have not been designed to incorporate the insights of those with lived and living experiences of trauma.

We must strengthen the capacity of systems to protect children and young people in order to ensure that responses are trauma transformative, healing informed and culturally strong.

Strategy 2030



Our Vision

End the trauma of abuse, exploitation and neglect suffered by children and young people.



Action 1. Empower communities

We will empower communities to protect and care for every child and young person.



Action 2. Heal trauma

We will develop and deliver tailored and effective therapeutic services for children and young people, carers and families.



Action 3. Address complexity

We will challenge reductionist perspectives that do not work for children.



Action 4. Mobilise knowledge for purpose

We will create, translate and share knowledge to drive better practice to the advantage of children and young people.



Action 5. Build a strong, collaborative organisation

We will strengthen our capacity to deliver outcomes and be collaborative and innovative in all that we do.



Empower communities

Our goal

Our vision to end the trauma of abuse, exploitation and neglect suffered by children and young people can only be realised when communities themselves feel empowered to care for and protect every child. To do this, we will build the awareness, confidence and capacity of networks of adults to act with purpose to keep children and young people safe and advocate for their needs. In this significant work, we are guided by the heart and expertise of adults with lived experience of childhood violation, the cultural knowledge of First Nations Peoples, the wisdom of children, young people and their families, the learnings from research and the insights of practitioners.

Educate, resource and support communities to keep children safe from abuse, exploitation and neglect in online and offline environments.

Be powerful advocates for children's rights and needs.

Expand our programs that support parents and carers to build strong relationships with children and young people.

Support self-determination by First Nations communities to protect, heal and support children and families.

Deliver pioneering approaches that assist organisations across Australia to safeguard children.

What is the change we aim to achieve

- Ending the trauma of abuse, exploitation and neglect of children is a sustained and central priority for the majority of the community.
- Parents feel confident and supported in raising their children.
- Organisations are safe places for children and young people.

How we will track success

The change we seek is generational. We will measure the shift in community attitudes and motivation to take action to keep children and young people safe. We will also evaluate the uptake and impact of the initiatives that engage and support communities to respond to the needs and entitlements of children and young people with commitment and resolve, including their right to safety, family, culture and education.



Heal trauma

Our goal

Our work creates meaningful change in the lives of children and young people who have experienced abuse, exploitation and neglect. Our therapeutic services are tailored to meet the needs of children and young people, and their families and communities at a local level. With decades of respected and applied experience, our next steps will advance the Foundation's approach to trauma transformative models of therapy and therapeutic care. Through employing and investing in evaluation, we will also continue to build our capacity to deliver more of the very best services.

Affirm and advance our common elements approach to trauma transformative practices and models of therapeutic care.

Design and deliver best practice programs that respond to the identified local and national needs of children, young people, parents, carers and the network of important adults around them.

Improve our operational service model to grow our program reach and impact.

Apply our evaluation framework across our services and extend the evidence-base of our approaches.

What is the change we aim to achieve

- Children and young people who have experienced trauma can access specialist support and meaningful therapeutic intervention when and where they need it.
- We have contributed towards an evidence base of 'what works' for children, young people and the significant relationships around them.

How we will track success

We will monitor the increasing reach of our therapeutic programs and services. We will identify and evaluate the outcomes our therapeutic programs and services achieve for children, young people and their families and carers. We will use this evidence to amplify the benefits of our approach to children across contexts and places.



Address complexity

Our goal

The abuse, exploitation and neglect of children and young people is a complex problem which we deeply understand. We know that disconnected responses are counterproductive to children and young people. Real change requires sophisticated strategies and actions that bring individuals and organisations together in acts of resistance to reductionist worldviews. And because we work across many systems and communities, we must be oriented to and capable of working within complex and dynamic systems of knowledge, policy, organisational structures and operational applications. We will lead the way as a valued and respected facilitator of resourceful strategies that keep the rights and needs of children and young people at the heart of our response.

Engage constructively with systems that hold power and provide knowledge-based solutions that give children and young people the relationships they need to be safe and cared for.

Embed the rich and full participation of children and young people in the design and review of services and systems.

Help individuals, families, communities, businesses and governments know how to act in the best interests of children and young people.

Develop our people, systems and services to better embrace and respond to complexity in its many forms.

What is the change we aim to achieve

- Child abuse, exploitation and neglect is understood as a complex but solvable societal problem that requires integrated and intersecting forms of knowledge and action.
- Children and young people are supported to fully participate in all aspects of our work.

How we will track success

Our contribution to complex challenges and systemic change will be sustained and deliberate. We will track our leadership and influence in improving outcomes for children and young people. We will evaluate the effectiveness of our internal culture and organisation to respond to the complex needs of children and young people in the many contexts and jurisdictions in which we work. We will evaluate the effectiveness of our knowledge mobilisation efforts.



Mobilise knowledge for purpose

Our goal

We create, translate and share knowledge to shape and influence the decision-making and practice of individuals, services and governments to best meet the needs of children and young people who have suffered the trauma of abuse, exploitation and neglect and/or may be living in out of home care. We connect to a global community of expertise to advance that knowledge. Our aim is to build the capability of practitioners across contexts to support children and young people with compassion, kindness and optimism. For us, the contest of ideas, pursuit and mobilisation of knowledge is fundamental to achieving better outcomes for children and young people.

Expand our knowledge sharing and learning offerings and support more practitioners and services to resource safety, healing and transformation for children and young people.

Drive our research agenda, partnering with and contributing to initiatives that enrich knowledge and advance practice.

Integrate lived and living experience of childhood trauma, cultural knowledge and practice wisdom into the co-design and co-production of our knowledge translation activities.

What is the change we aim to achieve

- Practitioners, organisations and governments use relevant knowledge to improve the ways services and systems are designed and implemented so that they better meet the needs of children and young people affected by trauma as a consequence of abuse, exploitation and neglect.
- We have effectively contributed to an Australian knowledge-base that is fit for purpose.

How we will track success

We will measure the collective reach, growth in engagement with and impact of our knowledge translation and capability building activities. We will also track the evolution of our knowledge base and its contribution to the field of practice with children, young people and their network of important adults. We will evaluate the inclusiveness of our knowledge to ensure it reflects the voices and histories of the children, young people and adults who are important to our work.



Build a strong, collaborative organisation

Our goal

We work as a connected, collaborative and integrated team, and our culture of collaboration extends broadly, nurturing partnerships in many forms. Our inter-disciplinary leaders and people bring depth to our work. They can see and hold complexity with skill, and are supported to respond and lead effectively in their roles. In order to support our continued success, we will invest in developing contemporary information and data management systems, ensuring our long term sustainability, maturing our capacity to measure impact, and enhancing our governance and decision-making frameworks.

Enhance our governance and business processes and systems to drive continued organisational success.

Invest in new technologies and systems and draw on data to drive efficiency and generate insight.

Develop the diversity, leadership and capability of our people to create and take advantage of opportunities for growth.

Nurture a collaborative and inclusive culture at all levels so that we can achieve even more through working together.

Stimulate continued development of our people to take up their roles with positive impact for children and young people.

What is the change we aim to achieve

- We are an organisation that is sustainable, integrated and able to invest time and resources into the strategies that have the most impact to end the trauma of abuse, exploitation and neglect suffered by children and young people.
- We have mature systems and processes to support our staff and leaders to achieve, measure and demonstrate impact.

How we will track success

We will measure improvement in our ability to make data-informed decisions, and to monitor our organisational sustainability, performance and health. Over time, we will build our capability to measure performance across more diverse metrics.



Children and young people are at the very heart of our actions at the Australian Childhood Foundation.



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**Australian Childhood Foundation
PO Box 3335, Richmond VIC 3121
Phone: 1300 381 581
Email: info@childhood.org.au
childhood.org.au**