



ACT Children's Plan 2010-2014

FINAL REPORT
November 2015



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Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the **children** of Canberra for their wonderful drawings in this publication.

Cover page: Picture drawn by an 11 year old boy from Evatt, ACT.

Purpose

In July 2014, the ACT Children and Young People's Taskforce (the Taskforce) requested that a final report on the *ACT Children's Plan 2010-2014* (ACT Children's Plan) be prepared for their consideration. This *ACT Children's Plan 2010-2014 Final Report* (the final report) responds to the Taskforce's request. The Taskforce noted that the key outcomes based reporting mechanism on the ACT Children's Plan is the annual publication of *A Picture of ACT's Children and Young People*.

Introduction

The ACT Children's Plan aimed to ensure that Canberra is a child and youth friendly city that supports all young people to reach their full potential, make valuable contributions and share the benefits of our community. This final report provides an overview of key achievements undertaken between 2010 and 2014 by the ACT Government across the six building blocks of the ACT Children's Plan. Reporting on outcomes for children in the ACT is presented in the annual publication of *A Picture of ACT's Children and Young People*.

This final report highlights work that focused on achieving positive outcomes for children, rather than providing a comprehensive list of all initiatives and programs developed or delivered for children by ACT Government directorates between 2010 and 2014. The report also identifies future work that responds to continuing challenges experienced by children in the ACT and aims to remove barriers to their social inclusion and participation.

The final report brings together information from ACT Government directorates' Annual Reports, annual publications of *A Picture of ACT's Children and Young People* and other government publications.

Background

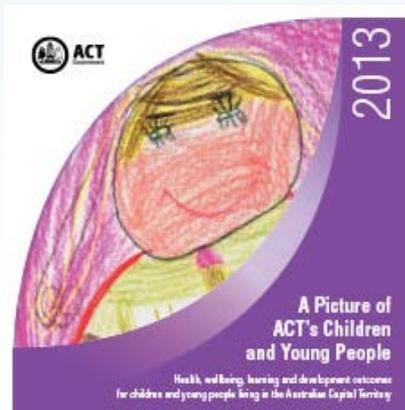
The first ACT Children's Plan was a ten year plan launched in 2004, to complement the ACT Government's *Building Our Community: The Canberra Social Plan 2004-2014*. The initial *ACT Children's Plan 2004-2014* put children on the agenda in the ACT and implemented several changes that have benefited children and families. Focus was placed on children now and in the future, children and their families, and children and their community.

The *ACT Children's Plan 2004-2014* acknowledged that children will thrive in a community that provides opportunities and supports them to reach their full potential. In 2009, the ACT Government undertook a refresh of the *ACT Children's Plan 2004-2014* and identified a range of achievements and set new priority areas for children. This new strategic direction was based on the voices of children, and best practice evidence, research and policies. The revised *ACT Children's Plan 2010-2014* (ACT Children's Plan) was closely aligned with the *ACT Young People's Plan 2009-2014* and shared in the vision to build Canberra as a child and youth friendly city.

The ACT Children's Plan was a refreshed whole-of-government and community document designed to provide the policy platform to guide new thinking and bring together ideas about what is possible for children in the ACT. The ACT Children's Plan defined a child as someone from birth up to 12 years of age. A range of national policies and frameworks that have been instrumental in supporting and furthering the ACT Children's Plan can be found at [Appendix A](#).



A Picture of ACT's Children and Young People complements work being undertaken nationally and within jurisdictions across Australia to measure outcomes for children and young people.



Outcomes reporting

The annual publication of *A Picture of ACT's Children and Young People* is the key reporting mechanism on outcomes for children in the ACT. First released in 2011, *A Picture of ACT's Children and Young People* presents data sets about children and young people aged 0-25 in the ACT (for highlights, see [Appendix B](#)).

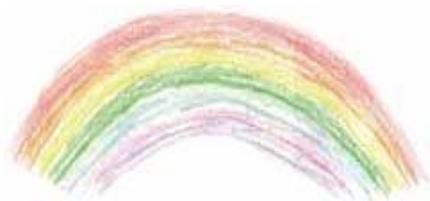
The ACT Children's Plan recognised that success in achieving the vision to become a child friendly city is dependent upon having the right infrastructure in place to build capacity and drive change. The ACT Children's Plan proposed six building blocks to build a child friendly city. These building blocks were developed in consultation with children, their families, community and government, recognising that children are active participants in their own lives.

A Picture of ACT's Children and Young People complements the ACT Children's Plan and provides a snapshot of how children and young people, families and their communities are faring against key health, wellbeing, learning and development outcomes. The publication implements Building Block Four of the ACT Children's Plan, which calls for regular monitoring and reporting of outcomes for children and young people in the ACT.

A Picture of ACT's Children and Young People also complements work being conducted nationally and within jurisdictions across Australia to report holistically on outcomes for children. The report provides the ACT Government and the community with an opportunity to reflect on the areas where children are doing well and identify areas where we can improve outcomes for this important group within our community.

The ACT Children's Plan provided the impetus for a range of activities across the ACT Government. Examples of key initiatives are reported under the six building blocks of the ACT Children's Plan in the following pages.

Opportunities for children to influence decisions about their lives and their community, and to actively participate in their communities



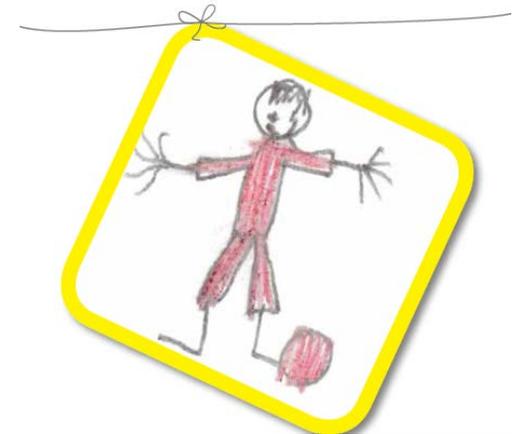
Building block 1

Key initiatives achieved include:

- ❖ Implemented the transition to the *National Disability Insurance Scheme* (NDIS), launched in the ACT in 2014, giving children with disability more choice and control and a lifetime approach to meeting their support needs.
- ❖ Consulted with children about the design and equipment for *Boundless Canberra*, which is the ACT's first all-abilities playground where children are able to interact socially with others, develop a sense of well-being and improve their muscle strength and coordination, language, cognitive thinking and reasoning abilities. Opened in 2013, *Boundless Canberra* actively involved children in contributing to the design of the playground.
- ❖ Included the views and preferences of children in decision-making and care planning in out of home care. This has been achieved through the adoption of the *Viewpoint* casework tool in September 2014, a software program that can survey the views, wishes and attitudes of children in care, through a series of age-related questionnaires.
- ❖ Consulted with parents of infants and children represented through the Paediatric User Group and Neonatal User Group to inform the model of care and the design principles for the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children, which opened in 2013. Children who were inpatients provided advice on what they needed to feel safe and comfortable in the Hospital School and the broader hospital environment.
- ❖ Provided opportunities for children to engage in play and leisure activities in their local community, including the redesign of play spaces through the *Play Space Renewals Program* delivered by Territory and Municipal Services. This ongoing program gives children and their families the opportunity to contribute to the redevelopment design of existing play spaces throughout Canberra.

- ❖ Created *On My First Day*, a publication of drawings and quotes from ACT kindergarten and Year 1 students describing what it felt like starting school and what other children need to know about this experience. The resource has proved popular in assisting children and parents to prepare for the transition to kindergarten and the 2011 publication has been reprinted and updated into an accessible online version.
- ❖ Involved Garran Primary School students to assist with the indoor and outdoor design, colour scheme and external landscaping of the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children by providing drawings and ideas to the architects.
- ❖ Engaged with the Paediatric Department and the Hospital School to run focus groups and gain feedback from children and their carers for the design of the George Gregan Playground at the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children. This input informed the design and the equipment installed in the playground.
- ❖ Supported children to learn about and participate in initiatives to save energy, conserve water, increase recycling, protect biodiversity and cut greenhouse gas emissions through the *ACT Nature Conservation Strategy 2013-23* and the *ACTSmart Schools* program.
- ❖ Delivered events and activities as part of Canberra's Centenary celebrations, including the opening of Stage One of the *Boundless Canberra* Children's Playground and the *Kids, Creatures and 100 Harlequins* Children's Week Festival. The festival was developed in consultation with a number of groups including the Green Teachers' Network and Children's Week Working Group.
- ❖ Consulted over 100 children from West Belconnen in November 2014 about their neighbourhood, as part of work to establish the West Belconnen Network, a key *Better Services* initiative. Children were asked about what they liked about their neighbourhood, what is important to them, what makes them feel safe, and whether they felt listened to. The children's ideas were included in a report on what is great about living in West Belconnen and what could be better.

- ❖ Introduced the *Engaging Schools Framework* to provide ACT public schools with a platform upon which schools can continue to enhance their approach to engaging *all* their students. Areas of good practice presented in the framework include: strengthening relationships; valuing, understanding and having high expectations of every student; enriching connections with communities; and building engaging school cultures. A whole school approach to innovation and engagement aligns the school's values, systems, culture and actions to generate and sustain the good practices, which help to create an engaging school.
- ❖ Conducted the Minister's Student Congress, which is a peak student leadership body composed of two student leader representatives from each ACT public school. Congress meets once each semester with the Minister for Education and Training to discuss issues and to give students a 'voice' on matters that relate to schools and their education.



Advocacy, promotion and protection of children's rights



Building block 2

Key initiatives achieved include:

- ❖ Implemented the *Working with Vulnerable People Scheme* in 2012 requiring anyone working with children or vulnerable people in the ACT to undergo a Working with Vulnerable People Check. The Scheme was introduced to reduce the incidence of sexual, physical, emotional or financial harm or neglect of children and vulnerable people.
- ❖ Developed and implemented the *ACT Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Out of Home Care*. The Charter is for all children and young people who are unable to live with their parents and living in short or long term out of home care. The Charter sets out what children and young people can expect from the people who are looking after them and work with them, when they are in care.
- ❖ Began work to implement the *Charter on the Rights of Children and Young People in Healthcare Services in Australia*. The Charter aims to promote and protects children's rights and will be rolled out as part of the *ACT Health Child Safe, Child Friendly and Child Aware Coordinating Framework*.
- ❖ Implemented *A Guide to Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect in the ACT* to ensure responsibilities for reporting child abuse and neglect occur as part of legislative requirements under the *Children and Young People Act 2008*.
- ❖ Supported the delivery of *Playing Together Playgroups* for children under the age of five who have a disability, chronic illness or developmental delay and their parents and caregivers. The playgroups provide a safe environment for children to play, learn and interact with other children and an opportunity for parents and caregivers to meet, share and enhance the strengths and skills they bring to their role of parenting.
- ❖ Provided funding to Legal Aid for the provision of legal services to people who could not otherwise afford legal representation or advice, including victims and witnesses of domestic violence.

- ❖ Supported the ACT's involvement in the activities of the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* in 2013-14, including the preparation of submissions to Royal Commission issues papers on working with children checks, towards healing, preventing sexual abuse of children in out of home care, and statutory victims of crime compensation schemes.
- ❖ Developed the *Working Together for Kids* booklet in 2014 to help guide children and families in their service journey with Care and Protection Services. Written by Care and Protection Services in partnership with FINACT, the booklet helps parents and other family members to understand how the child protection system works in the ACT. It covers information from receiving a Concern Report about suspected abuse and neglect of a child or young person through to care and protection matters being heard in the ACT Childrens Court.
- ❖ Consulted children in 2014 as part of the development of the *ACT Children and Young People's Commitment 2015-2025*. Children were asked what Canberra was doing well within the context of promoting and protecting children's rights and commented on improvements that could be made to support and protect children's rights within the Canberra community.
- ❖ Supported the publication of two books to assist children with disability: *Being Me, Being You* is a picture book about valuing difference and *101 Ways to Include People With Disability* is a student inspired book outlining creative ways to ensure people with disability are welcomed and valued.



Processes to assess the impact of law, policy and practice on children



Building block 3

Key initiatives achieved include:

- ❖ Introduced new legislation for education and care services in 2012 through the *National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care* by implementing the *Education and Care Services National Law ACT Act (2011)* and the *Education and Care National Regulations 2011*.
- ❖ Redesigned the *Child and Family Centre Service Model* in 2014, in order to operate as an efficient and effective subsystem of the human services system and deliver interventions that vary in intensity, adopt a life-course approach and focus on the early years of child development to give children the best start. The Child and Family Centres progressed from services that were co-located at the centres to service collaborations that focused on children and families.
- ❖ Developed *A Step Up For Our Kids* (Out of Home Care Strategy 2015-2020) placing out of home care on a sustainable funding path for the future by: supporting parents to retain care of their children safely; increasing investment in early intervention services and supports; reducing the rate of children coming into out of home care; improving outcomes for children and young people in care; and avoiding significant financial costs to government over the medium to long-term.
- ❖ Established the *ACT Children and Young People Death Review Committee* in March 2012. The Committee aims to find out what can be learned from a child or young person's death to help prevent similar deaths from happening in the future. The Committee is able to recommend changes to legislation, policies, practices and services that will help to prevent the number of deaths of children or young people in the ACT.
- ❖ Continued the partnership between the Community Services Directorate and Australian Catholic University through the Institute of Child Protection Studies to carry out high quality research, evaluation and professional development to enhance outcomes for children and families.



- ❖ Incorporated child-friendly planning design principles and building codes into the *ACT Planning Strategy, Planning for a Sustainable City 2012*. This strategy has included both age and child friendly design guidelines for incorporation in the Territory Plan and will continue to inform the preparation of master, concept and estate development plans in the future.
- ❖ Strengthened the focus on children's needs through the review of the *ACT Health Child Protection Policy* and development of a Child Protection Practice Paper and Standing Operating Procedure.
- ❖ Delivered the *Working with Children Toolkit* in July 2010 by training frontline workers to engage and support children who are experiencing homelessness.
- ❖ Developed the *Child, Youth and Family Services Program Service Delivery Framework: 2011-2015*. The Framework provides community service organisations and their staff with an approach and a range of practice prompts which promote reflection, innovation and continuous improvement of services. The Framework was designed primarily to assist programs funded under the Child, Youth and Family Services Program.
- ❖ Developed and implemented the *Care and Protection Services Integrated Management System* from 2012. The system assists Care and Protection Services staff to deliver good practice quality improvement, to continually review and improve the strategic framework in which services are delivered, and to enable Care and Protection Services to manage risk and achieve compliance.
- ❖ Contributed to the national review of the *National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care* in 2014.
- ❖ Introduced the provision of child protection training for all ACT Health staff to ensure awareness and understanding of relevant legislation, policies and practices relating to the wellbeing of children.
- ❖ Established a requirement that a child protection policy must be developed by community organisations every three years when entering into a new Service Funding Agreement with ACT Health.

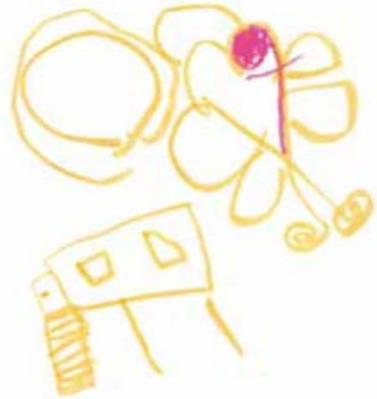
Regular monitoring of the state of children's health, well-being, learning and development



Building block 4

Key initiatives achieved include:

- ❖ Published the annual publication *A Picture of ACT's Children and Young People* (for highlights, see [Appendix B](#)). The publication represents a whole-of-government commitment to monitor indicators that measure child and young people's health, wellbeing, learning and development outcomes. The report provides the ACT Government and community with an opportunity to reflect on the areas where children are doing well and to identify areas where improvements can be made.
- ❖ Conducted the *Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)*, formerly known as the *Australian Early Development Index (AEDI)*, in the ACT. This is a triennial, national census that measures the development of children in their first year of school and assists with the planning, policy and program development and evaluation to improve early childhood outcomes.
- ❖ Contributed to the *Kids in Communities Study (KICS)*, a national investigation of community-level effects on children's developmental outcomes. Since 2014, KICS allows the Community Services Directorate to identify modifiable factors that impact on early childhood development within local communities, thus allowing for more effective targeting of funding and program planning.
- ❖ Implemented initiatives to improve mental health for children under the *Build a Strong Foundation: A Framework for Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing in the ACT 2009-2014*.
- ❖ Developed the *Strengthening Families Outcomes Framework* to report against the strengths of families in the ACT. The Framework aims to increase our understanding of factors that impact on the strengths of families and to allow for indicator comparisons between demographic groups.
- ❖ Developed the *Healthy Weight Action Plan* in 2014 to create preventative health measures to combat the rising rates of overweight and obesity in the ACT. The Action Plan promotes healthy lifestyles for children, including programs such as *Healthy Canteens, Ride or Walk to School*.



- ❖ Implemented a new computer program, *Viewpoint*, in Care and Protection Services to assist in the provision of de-identified data to report against the *National Standards for Out of Home Care*.
- ❖ Developed *My Health Passports* for children in out of home care as a mechanism to share important health and medical information about children and young people in care. The passports aim to provide information about children's health needs when they first come into care or move to a new home.
- ❖ Supported the Institute of Child Protection Studies, at the Australian Catholic University, to undertake research on *Refugee Communities Intercultural Dialogue: Building relationships, building communities*. This research aims to determine how services can better support refugee parents to care for their children and facilitate connections to support positive parenting skills and family relationships.
- ❖ Conducted the *ACT Year 6 Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey* in 2013-14, a classroom-based questionnaire conducted every three years on children's weight status, physical activity and nutrition.
- ❖ Published the *Health status of children in the ACT: Results from the 2007-10 ACT General Health Survey* in 2013-14.
- ❖ Continued research from the *ACT Health Kindergarten Health Check*, which ACT Health's Academic Unit of General Practice has been conducting with school health nurses since 1998. During 2013-14, a new Kindergarten Health Check parent questionnaire was developed. General Practitioners are now sent a copy of their patient's results for further monitoring and follow-up.
- ❖ Participated in the *National Child Oral Health Survey* in 2013, through the ACT Dental Health Program, conducted in collaboration with the Australian Research Centre for Population Oral Health and state and territory public dental services.
- ❖ Introduced the *Australian School Climate Measurement Tool Survey* in 2014 to all ACT public schools. A positive school climate and the creation of a safe and supportive environment are critical to a student's learning and wellbeing outcomes.

Services,
programs and
environments
that support
children's
optimal
development
and enhance
parental, family
and community
capacity



Building block 5

Key initiatives achieved include:

- ❖ Opened Franklin Early Childhood School in 2013, one of five early childhood schools in the ACT. This is a highly successful model of early years learning that provides children with the best start to their early development and education.
- ❖ Continued to deliver programs to support families through the Child and Family Centres. The centres offered parenting groups such as *Paint and Play* and *Parents as Teachers*, and provided parents with information and access to the broader range of services. The centres also delivered targeted group programs that provided more intensive support to vulnerable families, including *POPPY*, *Learn, Giggle and Grow*, the *Triple P Positive Parenting Program* *Playing and Learning to Socialise* programs for children aged three to six years.
- ❖ Offered parents and carers opportunities to participate in the *Circle of Security* relationship-based parenting program through the Child and Family Centres, which has been designed to help caregivers increase their awareness of their children's needs and whether their own responses meet those needs.
- ❖ Increased early intervention and prevention services for families through the Child and Family Centres, including an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural children's group, a group for mothers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, community events, activities and excursions.
- ❖ Opened the third Child and Family Centre at West Belconnen in May 2011 providing services to families in the West Belconnen and broader Belconnen area in need of support and information. The Centre has a strong focus on delivering services to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.
- ❖ Implemented the 14 recommendations of the *Taskforce on Students with Learning Difficulties* over the 2014 school year. This included professional learning for schools, parent/carer workshops and the launch of the Learning Difficulties page on the Directorate's website. The *Learning Difficulties Teacher*



Online Resource was also made available on the Directorate's internal Digital Backpack Learning Difficulties LIFE page.

- ❖ Opened *Melaleuca Place*, a children's Trauma Recovery Centre, which provides a high quality trauma-informed therapeutic program to children aged birth to 12 years who have experienced abuse and neglect and who are clients of Care and Protection Services who have involvement with Statutory Services.
- ❖ Opened Stage 2 of the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children in December 2013, bringing services for women and children under one roof, including paediatrics and specialised outpatient services, maternity, birthing, gynaecology and foetal medicine, the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and the Special Care Nursery.
- ❖ Provided a broad range of primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare services based on a family-centred, multidisciplinary approach to care in partnership with the consumer and other service providers. Services were provided at the Canberra Hospital, in community health centres and in community-based settings, including homes, schools, and child and family centres.
- ❖ Provided services that support children and their families with complex care needs including:
 - Parenting Enhancement Program (MaCH nurse role) including Maternal and Child Health Parenting Enhancement Program (continuity of care though home, clinic and phone contact)
 - Asthma Nurse Educator Service
 - Caring for Kids Program (care in the home for children with complex needs)
 - Child at Risk Health Unit (care for children affected by violence and abuse)
 - Integrated Multi-agencies for Parents and Children Together, which coordinated care for women with complex care needs who are pregnant and/or have young children
 - Child protection training for clinicians
 - Healthcare Access At Schools (HAAS) Program



- school-based nursing services, including immunisation, kindergarten health checks and the HAAS Program
 - nurse audiometry, providing hearing assessments to children and adults.
- ❖ Delivered programs aimed at reducing the rates of overweight and obesity in children aged 0–18 years including:
 - *Kids at Play (Active Play)* - to increase active play by children aged three to five years in Early Childhood Education and Care services.
 - *Fresh Tastes: healthy food at school* - to increase knowledge and availability of healthy food and drinks in ACT primary schools.
 - *Ride or Walk to School* - to encourage primary school students across the ACT to ride or walk to school.
 - *Healthy Food@Sport* - to increase healthy food choices available to children and young people through sporting canteens.
 - ❖ Provided Newborn Hearing Screenings to every newborn in the ACT to identify babies born with significant hearing loss and introduce them to appropriate services as soon as possible.
 - ❖ Launched the *National Disability Insurance Scheme* in the ACT in 2014. This scheme puts control and choice for children with disability at the centre of the scheme and represents a significant change in the way supports are funded. Transition programs are being developed with the community sector to ensure successful transition to the new scheme.
 - ❖ Opened *Boundless Playground* in 2013, the first all-abilities playground in the ACT where children are able to interact socially with others, develop a sense of well-being and improve their muscle strength and coordination, language, cognitive thinking and reasoning abilities.
 - ❖ Implemented initiatives under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Matters: Strategic Plan 2010-2013* to provide direction for closing the learning achievement gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

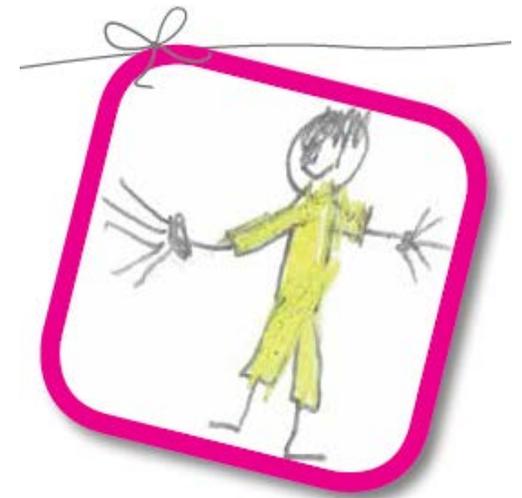


- ❖ Established a range of programs focused on health, weight, physical activity and healthy eating for children under the *National Partnership Agreement on Preventative Health 2010-2014*.
- ❖ Supported children and their families by embedding the *Child, Youth and Family Services Program* through delivering a range of child and family focused services and supports that meet the needs of vulnerable children and families in the ACT since March 2012.
- ❖ Continued to deliver the *Growing Healthy Families* program which uses a community development approach to engage, support and link Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families to services.
- ❖ Opened two new after-school and four vacation care programs for children and young people with disability to attend beginning in August 2011.
- ❖ Delivered the *Father Inclusive Practice Framework* which engages with fathers through universal and targeted service provision, through Child and Family Centres and ACT Health services such as the Maternal and Child Health drop-in clinic.
- ❖ Developed the *Strengthening Families* initiative, as part of *Better Services*, in working with families with multiple and/or intensive support needs to develop and implement an agreed family plan, supported by a tailored support package to meet their particular requirements. This initiative was initially trialled in 2013.
- ❖ Provided 15 hours of education per week at all ACT Government preschools, for children in the year before primary school, to align with the *National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education*.
- ❖ Upgraded and refurbished government-owned education and care services to enable them to better meet the *Education and Care Services National Law (ACT) Act 2011*. The ACT Government provided \$9 million over 2011-2013 to undertake upgrades.

- ❖ Upgraded ACT Government preschools through \$6.21 million funding to ensure compliance with the *Education and Care Services National Law (ACT) Act 2011*.
- ❖ Invested in grassroots and elite sport, promoting physical activity for children and providing recreational opportunities through the *Active 2020 Strategy*, delivered by the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate.
- ❖ Provided additional support for students where English is an additional language or with dialect backgrounds through the provision of *Introductory English Centres* at six locations across Canberra.
- ❖ Developed the pilot of the *Parent Child Interaction Therapy Program* at the Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre, in partnership with Care and Protection Services, Marymead Child and Family Centre, and the Education and Training Directorate. The program provides evidence-based support for children aged three to seven years who demonstrate serious behaviour problems.
- ❖ Provided the Schools as Communities strategic projects grants, which provided non-recurrent financial assistance to schools and community organisations for community development initiatives that built resilience in children and support families in their roles as parents.
- ❖ Supported the provision of specialised accommodation, outreach and specialist domestic and sexual violence services for women and children at risk of homelessness. This includes the provision of crisis and transitional accommodation and outreach support to women with accompanying children who are leaving home or have become homeless.
- ❖ Provided respectful relationship building in the teaching practices of schools in recognition of the importance of early intervention and targeted support for children exposed to domestic violence.
- ❖ Provided access to nurse-led care at school for children with complex or invasive healthcare needs through the *Healthcare Access at School Initiative* through ACT Health.



- ❖ Developed the *Everyone Everyday Disability Awareness Program* by Disability ACT as a teaching resource for schools. The program aims to provide schools and children with information to promote inclusion of children with disability.
- ❖ Provided access to early literacy programs such as *Giggle and Wiggle* for newborns to two years of age and *Story Time* for three to five year olds at Libraries ACT.
- ❖ Implemented the 14 recommendations of the *Taskforce on Students with Learning Difficulties* over the 2014 school year. This included professional learning for schools, parent/carer workshops and the launch of the Learning Difficulties page on the Directorate's website. The *Learning Difficulties Teacher Online Resource* was also made available on the Directorate's internal Digital Backpack Learning Difficulties LIFE page.



Effective
governance
mechanisms
across
government and
community



Building block 6

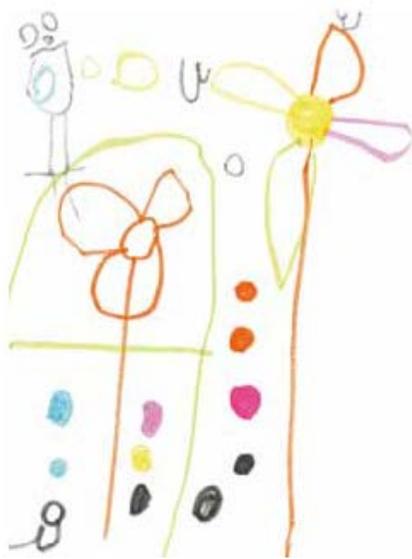
Key initiatives achieved include:

- ❖ Implemented the *Children and Young People's Outcomes Framework*, which provides a conceptual map of outcomes and indicators relating to the health, wellbeing, learning and development of children and young people. These indicators are reported on annually in *A Picture of ACT's Children and Young People*.
- ❖ Developed and implemented the *Education and Care Services National Law (ACT) Act 2011*, which came into effect on 1 January 2012. This National Law is for preschools, family day care, long day care and outside schools care to ensure services provide quality education and care under the National Quality Framework. The National Law also provides for an assessment and rating system that will give families greater access to information about the performance and quality of services they are accessing.
- ❖ Established the *ACT Children and Young People's Taskforce*, which is an across government executive management group established to improve outcomes for children and young people in the ACT. The Taskforce provides strategic leadership and coordination to influence and strengthen Canberra as a leader in child and youth affairs.
- ❖ Developed the *Human Services Blueprint* in collaboration with the ACT Government and community sector to guide how services and supports are provided so that people get the best outcomes for their circumstances. Under the *Human Services Blueprint*, three *Better Services* initiatives began in 2014 to ensure children and their families receive the right services, at the right time and for the right duration.
- ❖ Expanded the official visitor scheme to provide for *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Official Visitors* for children and young people in September 2013. The functions of the Official Visitor are to visit, receive and consider complaints from children and young people who are detained, or confined at a therapeutic protection place, or accommodated in a place of care. Official Visitors are members of the community from a range of cultural, professional and personal backgrounds with skill and experience relevant to the role and work independently of government administration.

- ❖ Ongoing operation of the *ACT Children and Youth Services Council* under the *Children and Young People Act 2008* (the Act). The Council provides advice to the Minister for Children and Young People about children and young people services in the ACT and matters relating to the Act.
- ❖ Reviewed gateway services to improve access to services and support for children and their families, including introducing the *Child, Youth and Family Gateway* and expanding the model through the *Better Services* initiative 'One Human Services Gateway' (1HSG). The 1HSG is designed to be a single access point for people to find out about a range of supports and services, and be referred to the most appropriate services and supports.
- ❖ Established the *Improving Educational Outcome Committee* to focus on improving education and training outcomes for children and young people in out of home care or on youth justice orders.
- ❖ Established the Child Development Systems of Care Working Group to enhance early childhood development through coordinating services for seamless service delivery.



Many of the initiatives started during the life of the ACT Children's Plan will continue.



Conclusion

The range of initiatives developed across the ACT Children's Plan has had a positive impact on children living in the ACT by encouraging their participation in all aspects of community life. While the ACT Children's Plan ended in 2014, the six building blocks to support a child friendly city remain relevant and continue to provide guidance on how children's lives in the ACT might be improved. Many of the initiatives started during the ACT Children's Plan will continue beyond the life of the plan.

In enhancing the ACT as a child friendly city, the ACT Government has continued to build upon the six building blocks; for example, the Child and Family Centres have progressed from delivering co-located services to supporting holistic service collaboration for children and families. This direction is consistent with the principles and priorities of the *Human Services Blueprint*, to transform the way human services are delivered to children and families.

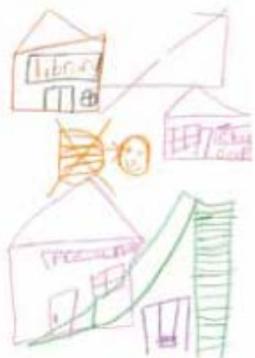
While significant progress has been made to meet the needs of children across the life of the ACT Children's Plan, it is recognised that work must continue to ensure that children are recognised as valuable and contributing participants in the ACT community and in their own lives.



Responding to challenges

While there were a number of key achievements under the Children's Plan, there are continuing challenges experienced by children in the ACT. The ACT Government is committed to future work to address these challenges by:

- Developing greater social inclusion to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate in the Canberra community. This includes work to:
 - build an inclusive community that enables all ACT residents, including children, to live good lives
 - improve outcomes for vulnerable ACT residents, including children
 - support collaboration to remove barriers to social inclusion and participation, and
 - reform the service system to provide the right services, at the right time, for the right duration.
- Reducing domestic and family violence in the ACT community, including funding ACT public schools to provide social and emotional learning programs, additional training for teachers and staff on domestic violence issues, and additional support for children who may be experiencing domestic violence.
- Continuing to deliver the *Healthy Weight Initiative* to promote good nutrition and exercise habits to children and young people, aiming to prevent obesity in children and young people.
- Implementing *A Step Up for Our Kids* (Out of Home Care Strategy 2015-2020) to achieve better outcomes for children in, and leaving, out of home care in the ACT.
- Providing individualised support for children with disability through the *National Disability Insurance Scheme*.
- Implementing the *ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015-18* to build strong foundations, resilient families, and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to achieve their personal life goals.





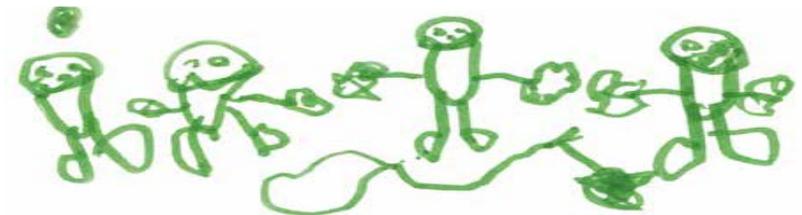
Future directions

The ACT Children's Plan shared the vision of the *ACT Young People's Plan 2009-2014* to build Canberra as a child and youth friendly city.

With the conclusion of both plans in 2014, the ACT Government has begun the development of the *ACT Children and Young People's Commitment 2015-2025* (the Commitment).

The Commitment will set a vision for a whole-of-government and whole-of-community approach to promote the rights of children and young people. The Commitment has been developed in consultation with children, young people, community agencies and the ACT Government, and designed using a consultative community engagement process.

In 2015, the Community Services Directorate will be reviewing the ACT Children and Young People Outcomes Framework and data collected for *A Picture of Children and Young People in the ACT*. This next step will align the collection of outcomes data for children and young people in the ACT with the Commitment.



Appendix A - National Frameworks

Initiatives delivered under the ACT Children's Plan fit within a broader national policy context focused on monitoring and promoting positive outcomes for children. Linkages with broader national frameworks, strategies and policies include:

- *Investing in the Early Years — A National Early Childhood Development Strategy (2009)* aims to build an effective early childhood development system in Australia that will contribute to the nation's human capital and productivity.
- *National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care* recognises the importance of quality early childhood education and care and aims to implement national quality standards to ensure consistent and high quality practices.
- *Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children* aims to build parenting and community capacity to care for children and reduce child abuse and neglect over time.
- *Closing the Gap* is a national integrated strategy to improve the lives of Indigenous Australians, and in particular provide a better future for Indigenous children.
- *Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy 2010–2015* aims to contribute to improving the health, nutrition and wellbeing of infants and young children, and the health and wellbeing of mothers, by protecting, promoting, supporting and monitoring breastfeeding.
- *National Strategy for Young Australians* describes what it is like to be young in Australia today and highlights eight priority areas for government action now and into the future.
- *National Framework for Universal Child and Family Health Services* provides children with a quality universal child and family health services that support their optimal health, development and wellbeing.
- *National Disability Strategy 2010–2020* provides a unified, national approach to improving the lives of people with disability, their families and carers.
- *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020* provides a long-term approach to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of Australia's children and aims to deliver a substantial and sustained reduction in levels of child abuse and neglect over time.

Appendix B - A Picture of ACT Children and Young People 2011-2015

The following provides a summary of the key highlights identified in the annual reports *A Picture of ACT Children and Young People* (2011-2014).

A Picture of ACT Children and Young People 2011

Highlights

- The ACT has the highest immunisation rate of all states and territories of children five years of age;
- ACT primary and high school students are amongst the highest performing students in the country, in the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy;
- The mean number of decayed, missing or filled teeth for 12 year olds accessing ACT Health Directorate services is less than in 2003–2004;
- The prevalence of tobacco use by secondary students in the ACT has decreased steadily over time;
- The number of one parent families and couples with children who are employed in either part-time or full-time work has increased; and
- 95% of urban residents in the ACT have access to a local neighbourhood play space within 400 metres of their home.

A Picture of ACT Children and Young People 2012

Highlights

- The percentage of ACT women smoking during pregnancy has decreased significantly between 2001 and 2009;
- The ACT continues to report one of the highest levels of fully immunised children at 5 years of age;
- The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the ACT achieving at or above the national minimum standard in reading, writing and numeracy continues to be higher than students nationally across years 3, 5, 7 and 9;
- The year 10–12 apparent retention rate has increased from 2007 and is significantly higher than Australian results;
- An increase in the percentage of ACT year 12 graduates employed or studying six months after completing an ACT year 12 certificate; and
- A reduction in the number of substantiated child protection reports.

A Picture of ACT Children and Young People 2013

Highlights

- The rate of young people who have offended continues to reduce, and is at its lowest over the preceding four year period;
- The number of young people in detention has continued to decrease in the last three years;
- The percentage of ACT women smoking during pregnancy has decreased significantly between 2001 and 2012, and is significantly lower than the national rate;
- The ACT continues to report one of the highest levels of fully immunised children at 5 years of age;
- The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the ACT achieving at or above the national minimum standard in reading, writing and numeracy continues to be higher than students nationally across years 3, 5, 7 and 9;
- The year 10–12 apparent retention rate has increased from 2007 and is significantly higher than Australian results; and
- An increase in the percentage of ACT year 12 graduates employed or studying six months after completing an ACT year 12 certificate.

A Picture of ACT Children and Young People 2014

Highlights

- The number of families accessing services from the Child and Family Centres has increased;
- The percentage of ACT women smoking during pregnancy has decreased significantly between 2002 and 2011, and is significantly lower than the national rate;
- An overall decrease in the rate of infant deaths in the past decade;
- Exclusive breastfeeding is showing an increasing trend over the past two years;
- The ACT continues to report low levels of the number of decayed, missing or filled teeth for children aged 12 years;
- The rate of young people who have offended continues to decrease, and is at its lowest rate over the preceding four-year period; and
- The number of young people under supervision or in detention has continued to decrease over the last three years.

A Picture of ACT Children and Young People 2015

Highlights

- Visits to neighbourhood parks increased from 75 per cent to 85 per cent during the year, which indicates an increase in park usage;
- The year 10–12 apparent retention rate for all ACT students increased between 2008 and 2014, and is higher than national results;
- The proportion of fully immunised children aged 60–63 months in the ACT has increased over time with 85 per cent of children fully immunised in 2009 increasing to 93 per cent in 2014;
- The number of families accessing services from the Child and Family Centres has increased in the most recent reporting period from 1,830 (in 2012–13) to 1,863 (in 2013–14);
- The proportion of ACT women smoking during pregnancy has decreased significantly between 2002 and 2012, and is significantly lower than the national rate;
- The proportion of children enrolled in a preschool program in the ACT increased for the 2014 reporting period;
- The rate of young people who have offended continues to decrease, and is at its lowest rate over the preceding five-year period;
- The rate of young people under supervision has declined and is at its lowest rate since 2008–09; and
- The number of young people in detention has continued to decrease over the last three years.

