



**Australian Government
Prime Minister's Community Business Partnership**

*Background Policy Paper:
First 1,000 days of a child's life
April 2018*

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1. Introduction and Recommendations

1.1 Introduction

On 18 April 2017, the Prime Minister's Community Business Partnership (the partnership) met with the Prime Minister, the Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP, and the former Minister for Social Services, the Hon Christian Porter MP, to reaffirm partnership priorities. These included practical strategies to bring together, and better leverage, Government, philanthropic and corporate investment, with a particular focus on Government priorities, such as addressing the needs of children in their first 1,000 days of life.

Subsequently the 'First 1,000 days of life' Working Group, convened by Ms Nicola Forrest, was established, with its' role to gain endorsement for two major streams of work:

- act in a formalised advisory capacity through the Prime Minister to the Minister of Social Services for oversight of the DSS led place-based approach, and
- actively champion the development of a national commitment and national agenda for early childhood development.

The Working Group began by engaging with current research, consulting with stakeholders across various sectors and conducting an in-depth site visit.

The consultation focused on developing a holistic understanding of the influencers connected to the first thousand days of a child's life and key opportunities for change.

The overwhelming consensus identified by the Working Group following its consultation is:

- the rationale for early investment in children was broadly accepted by community leaders, policy makers and service providers. There is momentum to act more concisely on this
- place-based approaches to service delivery represent the most effective way to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable children and families. However there are boundaries to such approaches being implemented at scale, and
- Australia as a nation lacks an overriding agenda for thriving children and families, which contributes to fragmentation and inconsistent outcomes.

1.2 Recommendations

Based on its consultation and key issues identified the Working Group recommends that:

1. prioritise early childhood development as a social, health, economic and education issue
2. allocate a clear Ministerial responsibility for children from conception to the age of five years, noting we commend your recent appointment of Minister Gillespie as Assistant Minister for Children and Families
3. investigate a new Deductible Gift Recipient category with the criteria for endorsement focused on place-based principles of service delivery
4. embed place-based principles in funding and service delivery protocols as the norm rather than the exception
5. in relation to the DSS led place-based approach, to be implemented in 10 communities:
 - a. formalise the Partnership's role advising on the design and implementation, and

- b. use the learnings as proof of concept to inform broader roll-out of place-based initiatives across Australia
6. establish a national entity to advocate, fundraise for, and deliver place-based early childhood models in line with the establishment of the Foundation for Regional and Rural Renewal and Australian Schools Plus.

Detailed recommendations are provided at **Appendix A**.

2. Policy Background

2.1. Overview of early childhood development in Australia

The rationale for early investment in children is broadly accepted and there is momentum to act more effectively on this matter. There is significant existing Commonwealth expenditure across multiple departments. There is a desire to do things differently by the Commonwealth and States and Territories. However, Australia as a nation lacks an overriding agenda for thriving children and families. Further, a number of immediate steps can be taken to augment existing effort and strengthen the foundation for a comprehensive policy platform.

The summary of relevant Commonwealth funded initiatives for early childhood (**Appendix B**) describes 16 streams of work delivered or funded under five separate Commonwealth departments including the Departments of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Education, Social Services, Health and Employment.

The Commonwealth Government contributes through a combination of grant-based support to external providers, subsidies paid direct to families and bilateral partnerships with the states and territories. Total committed funds across these programs are substantial.

Evidence¹ suggests that place-based approaches to service delivery represents an effective way to addressing disadvantage and to improving outcomes for the most vulnerable children and families. Evaluations of individual place-based approaches show that they can be highly effective and, consequently, international support for place-based approaches has been growing.

The approaches themselves continue to evolve and to date, consistent assessment of models over time has been limited. The evidence can be affected by a lack of rigour regarding the definition of place-based, and program design and evaluation methodologies.

Literature reviews and consultations with policy officers and practitioners (on the lessons learned from previous approaches) highlight certain key characteristics as important elements of effective place-based approaches²:

- *People and place*: It is important to understand the place, approach place-based issues as complex problems, and connect economic and social policy at a local level.
- *Joined-up working*: A framework for integrating effort across government is important, getting government working together across and within levels of government, including integrating service delivery.

¹ DSS 'Place based Approaches to disadvantage', March 2017: pages 20-21

² Commonwealth Place-based Service Delivery Initiatives, AIFS 2015; Governance Models for Location Based Initiatives, Social Inclusion Board, 2011; Practical place-based initiatives, PM&C, 2012; Insights from practitioners, the DHS Network and internal DSS consultations, cited in DSS 'Place based Approaches to disadvantage', March 2017: page 21

- *Building capacity*: Moving to collaborative, adaptive approaches requires significant behaviour and cultural change from both government and the community, and capacity development needs to be resourced.
- *Measuring impact*: Measuring impact should be part of the planning process, designed for the long term and be adequately resourced. Evaluations should include causality, attribution, a theory of change, residential mobility and cost-effectiveness.
- *Local and flexible*: Place-based approaches require a level of devolution and partnering with the community that allows significant and meaningful local involvement in determining the issues and solutions.
- *Governance*: Governance arrangements need to provide the authorising environment to support local decision-making, and corresponding risk and accountability mechanisms.
- *Long-term focus*: Addressing persistent and complex problems takes time. Place-based approaches need to be designed and resourced for the long term.

The Working Group identified a need to leverage existing momentum and learning (e.g. Logan Together) and realise opportunities for alignment across separate initiatives, such as:

- Department of Social Services (DSS) led place-based approach to be implemented in 10 communities across Australia with \$400,000-\$570,000 per financial year for up to three years initially in each of the selected communities
- *Connected Beginnings* initiative with 12 sites signed on and \$10m per annum to increase integration in priority communities and with an additional one off allocation of \$12m from the Department of Health.
- *Our Place* initiative in Victoria in 10 sites, based at schools in vulnerable areas
- *Early Years* initiative proposed in four sites in WA, with a 10 year funding commitment, and
- a range of initiatives with existing momentum across Australia i.e.
 - Logan Together (Qld)
 - Challis Parenting and Early Learning Centre (WA)
 - Dusseldorf Forum partners
 - Opportunity Child partner sites
 - Various other state initiatives

2.2 Report of the First 1,000 Days Working Group

The goal of the Working Group is to gain endorsement for three major streams of work:

- act in a formalised advisory capacity through the Prime Minister to the Minister of Social Services for oversight of the Department of Social Services (DSS) led place-based approach to be implemented in 10 communities
- actively champion the development of a national commitment and national agenda for early childhood development, and
- identify practical steps that could be undertaken to inform and support place-based early childhood models.

The Working Group commenced its work by engaging with current research, consulting with stakeholders across various sectors and conducting an in-depth site visit.

The consultation focused on developing a holistic understanding of the influencers connected to the first thousand days of a child's life and key opportunities for change.

The site visit involved the Working Group visiting the Logan Together initiative in early 2017.

The Working Group also received an early childhood development presentation from subject matter experts Professor Steve Zubrick³ and David Ansell⁴ in August 2017.

The overwhelming consensus identified by the Working Group following its consultation was:

- the rationale for early investment in children was broadly accepted by community leaders, policy makers and service providers. There is momentum to act more concisely on this
- place-based approaches to service delivery represent the most effective way to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable children and families. However there are boundaries to such approaches being implemented at scale, and
- Australia as a nation lacks an overriding agenda for thriving children and families which contributes to fragmentation and inconsistent outcomes.

In shaping its' advice, the Working Group noted some important recent developments in the sector on the early childhood development agenda.

- The release on 1 February 2018 of the *Lifting Our Game* report⁵ which identifies the opportunities to achieve better education outcomes through early childhood interventions. The report has a strong focus on maintaining the provision of early education for four-year olds and the progressive increase of early education for three-year olds. It notes system impediments that contribute to the fragmented nature of Australia's approach to the early years, which ultimately impact child outcomes. It also notes the Australia's below average position amongst OECD nations in its level of investment in early education. Amongst its six recommendations is emphasis on: targeting additional support for vulnerable families, improving the quality of the early childhood workforce, enhancing community understanding of the importance of the early years and driving more transparency and accountability across the sector.
- The Commonwealth Government's release in February 2018⁶ of an update on progress towards the Closing the Gap targets, which encouragingly shows progress has been made on the two targets related to early childhood for Indigenous children – child mortality and participation in four-year-old education.
- The launch in September 2017 by UNICEF of the *Early Moments Matter* report⁷ at the United Nations Headquarters which included a call to action for all governments. One of its six recommendations urged nations to provide dedicated leadership for early childhood

³ Steve Zubrick is a Senior Principal Research Fellow based at the Telethon Kids Institute and Deputy Director (Research) for the ARC Centre of Excellence for Children and Families over the Life Course. Prior to joining the University of WA, he spent 12 years as Head of the Division of Population Science at the Telethon Kids Institute.

⁴ David Ansell is Chairperson of Child Australia and Co-Director, Policy at Co-lab (a partnership between Telethon Kids Institute and the Minderoo Foundation). He was previously Acting Deputy Director General of the Department of Culture and the Arts, and a former School Principal and a teacher.

⁵ Ms Susan Pascoe AM and Professor Deborah Brennan authors - <https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/whats-happening-in-the-early-childhood-education-sector/lifting-our-game-report>

⁶ <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/2018-closing-gap-report>

⁷ https://www.unicef.org/publications/index_100862.html

development programs through a coordinating minister or body to drive integration and more effective service delivery.

- The latest Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)⁸ shows one in five children are starting school developmentally vulnerable. This rises to two in five for indigenous children. In addition, over 730,000 children in Australia are living in poverty, this is despite record economic growth with the rate of poverty in Australia higher than the average of OECD countries. Evidence shows that children living in poverty are unlikely to escape the cycle of disadvantage and go onto a life of vulnerability. The social and economic costs of this reality are exponential the longer a child's vulnerability is not addressed.

⁸ <https://www.aedc.gov.au/>

Key Issue	Recommendation
<p>1. Childhood vulnerability a national issue for Australia and coordinated by the Commonwealth.</p>	<p>1.1 The Australian Government should prioritise early childhood development as a social, health, economic and education policy issue.</p> <p>Details: The latest Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) a measure conducted every three years when a child turns five, shows one in five children are starting school developmentally vulnerable. This rises to two in five for indigenous children. In addition, over 730,000 children in Australia are living in poverty, this is despite record economic growth with the rate of poverty in Australia higher than the average of OECD countries. Evidence shows that children living in poverty are unlikely to escape the cycle of disadvantage and go onto a life of vulnerability. The social and economic costs of this reality are exponential the longer a child’s vulnerability is not addressed.</p> <p>The Partnership recommends focus on early childhood as a priority policy issue by the Commonwealth Government. This leadership would build on significant existing momentum at the community level across states and territories. It will also legitimise early childhood development as a critical social and economic issue thereby enabling more engagement and investment by corporate and philanthropic stakeholders.</p>
<p>2. Clear Ministerial responsibility for children from conception to age 5</p>	<p>2.1 Clear Ministerial responsibility for children from conception to age 5. Practically this would involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. long term and bipartisan commitment to enabling better outcomes for children b. coordination between government through the equivalent of COAG commitment to a new agenda for children c. alignment of all early childhood programs and funding delivered by the Commonwealth under one point of Ministerial control d. commitment to national targets and regular reporting against those targets to increase the number of children developmentally on track (as measured by the AEDC), and e. ongoing commitment to scale place-based approaches through other reform priorities and a targeted focus on priority communities. <p>Details: Australia does not have a consistent policy framework or agenda for early childhood. Currently, responsibility, funding and services for children are spread across at multiple Commonwealth Ministers and Departments and are then further fragmented through varying arrangements at a State and Territory government levels. According to a summary from the</p>

Key Issue

Recommendation

Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (see **Appendix B**), there are currently 16 streams of work delivered or funded under five Commonwealth Departments including the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Department of Education, Department of Social Services (DSS), Department of Health and Department of Employment. Services or funding are provided in a combination of grant-based support to external providers, subsidies paid direct to families and bilateral partnerships with the states and territories. Total committed funds across these programs are substantial but are not coordinated or aligned under a consistent policy framework. Communities, funders and not-for-profit providers report being frustrated about the lack of consistency and siloed government approach to an issue that must be approached holistically (child development).

The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children was endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in April 2009 and is due for renewal in 2020. The Framework represents Australia's highest level of collaboration on the issue of children and families between Commonwealth, State and Territory governments and non-government organisations, through the Coalition of Organisations Committed to the Safety and Wellbeing of Australia's Children. Its focus has been on delivering a reduction in levels of child abuse and neglect over time. Similarly, the Commonwealth Government's Closing the Gap targets have been focused on reducing childhood mortality and access to universally provided education services. There is a need for a broader focus that encompassing all forms of developmental vulnerability and the need for children to not only survive but thrive.

In September 2017, UNICEF launched the Early Moments Matter report at the United Nations Headquarters which included a call to action for all governments. One of its six recommendations urged nations to provide dedicated leadership for early childhood development programs through a coordinating minister or body to drive integration and more effective service delivery. The Commonwealth Government should consider adopting or endorsing the framework to develop its own localised policy agenda for early childhood.

3. Need for a community-led vehicle to hold and disburse funds for place-based work.

3.1 The Commonwealth Government should investigate the development of a new DGR category with the criteria for endorsement focused around place-based principles of service delivery.

Details: Communities and not-for-profit organisations consistently report difficulty in attracting and administering funds for place-based work. It could also be argued that the level of philanthropic funding for place-based work is limited by the lack of deductible entities approved to work in this way. The key issue is two-fold firstly communities, specifically regional and rural

Key Issue

Recommendation

communities, struggle to create a legal structure, which is needed for them then to seek DGR. This is due in most part to cost and complexity and lack of resources to understand the issues. Predominantly communities get on with the “doing and solving key issues” rather than spending time and money on the legal framework.

Recommendation 3.1 of SII working group recommendations should overcome this issue if a single structure can be recommended or created and key documents are available for communities to use at low cost and without legal skills. This will not solve the secondary issue which is communities struggle with applying for DGR successfully, again for similar reasons to the above and because in these communities they undertake many roles rather than the single charitable purpose which sits under the current DGR regime.

A site visit to the *Logan Together* initiative, for example, revealed a complex arrangement of agreements between various entities to enable the place-based initiative. This arrangement was the only option to receive and disburse tax deductible funds and bring some form of central administration to a large-scale place-based model.

The Partnership recommends the development of a new DGR category that responds to the current and increasing body of research around place-based service delivery. Such entities could then act as a collaborative funding mechanism, sector facilitator and central point of accountability for funding delivered across communities for common goals. It would reflect the actual reality of these communities which is one organisation fulfils many charitable roles and would allow one body if need to auspice other activities or organisations in a coordinated and collaborative way.

4. Legitimise place-based principles within government funded or provided service delivery.

4.1 Place-based principles should be embedded in Commonwealth Government funding and service delivery protocols as the norm rather than the exception.

Details: DSS has undertaken extensive research and consultation to build its internal understanding of place-based service delivery. The Partnership commends the Department for this work. The Department has commenced a shift to work in a less siloed fashion in recognition to the needs of the community and this should be continued across Government departments.

Key Issue**Recommendation**

Key principles should be codified within departmental processes, protocols and tender arrangements to legitimise and embed place-based service delivery across the government. Such principles could be drawn from the Department's existing documentation including those contained in the following extract:

Take a systems approach	1. <i>We look at what is happening across the whole system and work to bring the system together around a place.</i>
Focus on data, evidence and outcomes	2. <i>We focus on clear and measurable outcomes and hold ourselves accountable for the results.</i> 3. <i>We use data and evidence to inform policy, make decisions on strategy and investment, and guide practice and innovation.</i>
Long-term investment	4. <i>We commit to long-term support and investment, including helping to build community capacity and local leadership and institutions to deliver sustainable outcomes.</i>
Understand the place	5. <i>We hold community at the heart of what we do and have a clear understanding of the needs of a place, its assets including social capital, and the opportunities available to make better use of existing resources.</i>
Partner with others	6. <i>We engage the community as equal partners, and genuinely collaborate with all stakeholders to develop and deliver shared outcomes.</i> 7. <i>We facilitate and actively encourage innovative approaches to achieve agreed outcomes among our partners.</i>

Key Issue	Recommendation
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Local community decision-making	<p>8. <i>We build the capacity and authority of communities to solve their own challenges.</i></p> <p>9. <i>We are committed to governance mechanisms that support devolved decision-making and funding and provide authority to people on the ground to broker local solutions.</i></p> <p>10. <i>We share accountability across governments, non-government organisations and communities and manage risk based on agreed outcomes and transparent and measurable policy objectives. Accountabilities, including roles and responsibilities, are clear.</i></p> <p>11. <i>We share data, information and evidence to develop a common understanding of the issue, create shared measurement and accountability, and support continuous improvement and a culture of try, test and learn.</i></p>
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(extract from DSS 'Place based Approaches to disadvantage', March 2017: page 7)

5. Use 'proof of concept' to inform place-based work at a national level

5.1 Utilise the DSS led place-based approach as a proof of concept to inform broader roll out of place-based work by the Commonwealth Government.

Details: DSS has initiated the co-design of the place-based approach, representing a critical opportunity for the Commonwealth Government to refine large scale place-based models and inform broader roll out. The Commonwealth Government should utilise the DSS led place-based approach as an opportunity to build on the work of DSS to date and further codify effective place-based practice, including for example:

- develop an active learning network accessible to participating sites and those of other initiatives working in an integrated way (for example Connected Beginnings sites)
- develop and promote case studies from the network
- establish a robust evaluation focused on process and outcomes to deepen sector understandings of place-based delivery
- publicly report data and learnings throughout the implementation, and
- develop professional development material to codify and enable the scaling of integrated service delivery in new contexts.

Key Issue	Recommendation
<p>6. Partnership as an advisory body to the DSS led place-based approach</p>	<p>6.1 Formalise the role of the Community Business Partnership as an advisory body to the DSS led place-based approach.</p> <p>Details: In the absence of a national policy framework, the Commonwealth Government should establish an advisory body for the DSS led place-based approach through the Partnership to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure the recommendation components of effective place-based models are encapsulated in the 10 site roll out • attract non-government investment and other partnerships • promote the initiative on an ongoing basis and advocate for the scaling of effective components • provide support/advice from the other Working Group/s to support any structural or legal reform issues identified • commission research and other support to inform an evidence-based approach, and • ensure alignment of the DSS led place-based approach with other place-based initiatives such as Connected Beginnings and efforts underway at a state and territory level (Western Australia and Victoria) including alignment under a common outcome framework. <p>This position has also been separately presented by the Partnership to DSS.</p>
<p>7. National entity to advocate, fundraise and deliver place-based early childhood models</p>	<p>7.1 Establish a national entity to advocate, fundraise for and delivery place-based early childhood models in line with the establishment of the Foundation for Regional and Rural Renewal (FRRR) and Australian Schools Plus.</p> <p>Details: FRRR and Australian Schools Plus were established under the leadership of the Commonwealth Government to address critical economic and social decline and to address structural barriers to achieving positive community outcomes.</p> <p>Given the fragmented nature of the early years and need for deeply collaborative approach, the Partnership recommends the establishment of a similar entity for the early years. Such an entity should be established with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seed funding from the Commonwealth Government

Key Issue	Recommendation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• granting of unique deductible gift recipient status, and• a challenge for matched funding to philanthropy. <p>Such an entity could act as a peak body for place-based initiatives focused on delivery early childhood development outcomes. This would provide/enable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• coordination across the sector• entry point for national engagement across smaller scale initiatives• more consistent accountability and outcome capture, and• central location for government, philanthropic and corporate resources.

Commonwealth Funded Initiatives for Early Childhood⁹

DEPARTMENT OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET

Indigenous Advancement Strategy - Early Childhood activities

The Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) is the way in which the Australian Government funds and delivers a range of programs targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Introduced on 1 July 2014, the IAS replaced more than 150 individual programs and activities with five flexible, broad-based programs. Under the Children and Schooling program, the IAS supports families and children from early childhood through to tertiary education, training and jobs.

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PMC) funds activities under the IAS for Indigenous early childhood and family support services. Since the commencement of the IAS in July 2014, the Australian Government has committed over \$257 million to support early childhood. The IAS funds 315 service providers and almost 400 activities including services operating out of Children and Family Centres to support early childhood development, parenting support and transition to school activities. This is in addition to the substantial mainstream Australian Government investment in child care, preschool, health and family support.

Activities under the IAS are grant based and have a focus on increasing the participation of Indigenous children and parents in early childhood activities, getting children ready for school, developing effective parenting skills and fostering healthy and safe family environments. The IAS funds a range of early childhood initiatives, including supported playgroups, family support services, child care and supplementary support for preschool.

Families as First Teachers

The Families as First Teachers (FaFT) program provides early learning and family support programs to remote Indigenous families with young children from birth to three years. Operating since 2009, the FaFT program is a quality early learning program for vulnerable and disadvantaged children from birth to three years of age. The FaFT program also provides parenting support and guidance.

This early learning program is delivered exclusively for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families with children from birth to school age. Adult capacity-building is also provided through family support and by linking services within local communities. School readiness is addressed through the FaFT - Indigenous Parenting Support Services Program in early learning groups with a focus on literacy and numeracy foundations, orientation to school programs and, as part of a dual generational approach, parent engagement initiatives.

⁹ This is not an exhaustive list and was developed by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet for the Partnership.

The program is funded by the NT Government and the Australian Government through the National Partnership on Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment.

It is anticipated that the NT Department of Education will expand the FaFT program to 33 remote and very remote communities by 31 December 2017 as part of the A Share in the Future – Indigenous Education Strategy 2015- 2024.

The Australian Government has provided \$13.565 million over three years to the Northern Territory Government to aid the continuation of the Families as First Teachers (FaFT) programme as well as a developmental assessment tool to be trialled at selected sites.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education

The first National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education was signed by the Council of Australian Governments on 29 November 2008. Under this agreement, all governments committed to work together to ensure that all children have access to a quality early childhood education program, delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher for 15 hours per week in the year before they attend full-time school.

As part of the 2017-18 Budget, the Australian Government is committing a further \$428 million to continue Commonwealth support for preschool throughout 2018. The funding will be provided through a one-year extension to National Partnership arrangements. The 2018 National Partnership is currently being developed. This will benefit around 346,000 children across all preschool settings, and brings the total Commonwealth investment in preschool to \$3.2 billion since 2008.

National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda

The Australian Government is providing the states and territories up to \$61.1 million over three years until 30 June 2018 under the National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care (NPA NQA) to maintain the national approach to the regulation and quality assessment of services.

States and territories have primary responsibility for regulating early childhood education and care under the National Quality Framework (NQF). They are responsible for approving services and ensuring they comply with the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* (National Law) and *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* (National Regulations).

Closing the Gap target

Under Closing the Gap, the Council of Australian Governments has set measurable targets to address and reduce Indigenous disadvantage.

The early childhood target is for *95 per cent of all Indigenous four year-olds to be enrolled in early childhood education by 2025*. The 2015 baseline data for this target showed that 87 per cent of Indigenous children were enrolled in early childhood education in the year before full-time school.

Budget Based Funded Program / Childcare Funding

Budget Based Funded Program

The Budget Based Funded (BBF) Program was established in 2003 consolidating administration of a range of child care and early learning services. Approximately 290 BBF services are funded under the program with grants to support the delivery of a range of child care and school age care services in regional and remote areas and Indigenous communities, where the market would otherwise fail to deliver services that meet the needs of families. Many BBF services are the sole providers of child care in their communities.

BBF delivery models include centre based Crèches, Long Day Care type services, Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) services, Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services, Mobile Services, Playgroups, Flexible services and other services (toy libraries, nutrition programs). BBF services are able to tailor their program to the needs of families in their community. This includes Indigenous services being able to deliver culturally strong programs and integrated services to ensure the needs of children are met. In 2016-17, over 18,000 children utilised a BBF service, more than 11,000 of these are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. In addition, 1,564 staff were engaged by BBF services, of these 721 are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

The BBF Program will cease in June 2018 and existing services are being supported to transition to the new child care Package that commences 2 July 2018 or alternative funding arrangements. Under the new arrangements, the Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) commits \$61.8 million to support BBF services transition to the new arrangements. The money will also support services to meet the costs of expanding to increase Indigenous children's participation in care.

New Child Care Package

In April 2017, the Australian Parliament passed new legislation which changes the way the Australian Government will fund child care. The new child care package is scheduled to come into effect on Monday 2 July 2018. Under the new arrangements, child care services will have access to three forms of financial support, depending on eligibility: the Child Care Subsidy (CCS); Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS); and the Community Child Care Fund (CCCF). The centrepiece of the package is the CCS. When the CCS commences in July 2018, it will:

- replace the Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate with a single, means tested subsidy
- be paid directly to service providers to be passed on to families
- be simpler than the current multi-payment system
- be better targeted and provide more assistance to low and middle income families.

Family entitlement to the CCS will be determined by a three-step activity test, more closely aligning the hours of subsidised care with the combined hours of work, training, study or other recognised activity undertaken, and providing for up to 100 hours of subsidy per fortnight.

Connected Beginnings (also funded by the Department of Health)

The Connected Beginnings program commenced from July 2016 as part of the Community Child Care Fund. Each year, around \$10 million in Commonwealth funding is available to integrate early childhood, maternal and child health, and family support services with schools in a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities experiencing disadvantage. Currently, the program is being delivered in eight communities and continues to be implemented progressively with up to seven extra locations expected in 2017-18.

The Connected Beginnings program aims to improve the ability of Indigenous children in areas of high need to achieve a positive transition to school. It will also connect families to services across health, education and family support systems tailored to their needs. Participation in quality early childhood education and care is valuable for all children. It is particularly important for vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and can have a positive impact on school preparation and attendance, and academic success, improving quality of life.

The program is modelled on a place-based approach that builds in capability development, for example, through the recruitment of coordinators and family engagement workers, including local Indigenous staff, and the establishment of collective governance arrangements. Site implementation with lead agencies follows extensive consultation and negotiation with state and territory governments, communities, existing community governance boards and other Commonwealth agencies. These consultations are critical to the development of the program and its successful implementation to date. Projects in each location have been individually co-designed with communities to respond to local circumstances, promoting cohesion within communities.

The Department Education and Training is working collaboratively with the Department of Health to jointly deliver the program. An evaluation of the program commenced in early 2017, in partnership with the Department of Health.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children

The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 (the National Framework), endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments in April 2009, is an ambitious, 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.

The National Framework represents the highest level of collaboration between Commonwealth, State and Territory governments and non-government organisations, through the Coalition of Organisations Committed to the Safety and Wellbeing of Australia's Children, to ensure Australia's children and young people are safe and well. It includes high level and other supporting outcomes and actions which are being delivered through a series of three-year action plans.

The publication looks in detail at the need for the Commonwealth, state and territory governments and non-government organisations to work together to protect Australia's children.

The National Framework outlines six supporting outcomes and provides details about how each of these outcomes will be achieved.

The six supporting outcomes are:

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

Building Capacity in Australian Parents trial

The Building Capacity in Australian Parents (BCAP) trial sits under Strategy 1 of the National Framework's Third Action Plan 2015-2018: early intervention with a focus on the early years, particularly the first 1000 days for a child. The aim of the BCAP initiative is to trial a particular model of providing the support and tools that parents need to help their children thrive in the first 1000 days.

Families and Children Activity (Under the Families and Communities Program)

Currently over \$255 million a year in Commonwealth funding is being committed to the Families and Children Activity. This Activity aims to provide integrated services for families to achieve improved child, youth, adult and family wellbeing, increased economic engagement and more cohesive communities. To achieve this objective, services must work collaboratively to provide an integrated suite of local services. It consists of six sub-activities:

- Family Law Services
- Family and Relationship Services
- Communities for Children Facilitating Partners
- Children and Parenting
- Young People
- Adult Specialist Support.

Examples of programs funded include (though are not limited to):

HIPPY

The Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY) is a two-year, home-based early learning and parenting program for families with young children. A specifically designed and structured curriculum of learning activities, consistent with AEDC domains and the Early Years Learning Framework, is delivered to the child by parents and carers.

The program builds the confidence and skills of parents and carers to create a positive learning environment to prepare their child for school. The program also offers some parents and carers a supported pathway to employment and local community leadership.

There is no cost to families participating in the program. Materials and resources are provided to families free of charge.

The Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL), through HIPPY Australia, has an exclusive licence from HIPPY International to run the program in Australia. The program is delivered by existing not-for-profit organisations in each location.

Intensive Family Support Services

Intensive Family Support Service (IFSS) is an innovative intensive home and community based family support service offered to vulnerable families.

The Australian Government funds non-government organisations to provide IFSS to parents and caregivers of children where child neglect is a concern, and supports these providers to establish and implement service delivery.

IFSS provides practical parenting education and support to parents and caregivers in their communities and homes, to help them improve the health, safety and wellbeing of their children. IFSS is evidence-informed. Its impact is assessed by measuring service outcomes, including increased parental capacity, increased child wellbeing and reduced child neglect.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Indigenous Australian's Health Program

On 1 July 2014, the Australian Government established the Indigenous Australians' Health Program (the Program). This consolidated four previously existing funding streams: primary health care funding, child, maternal and family health programs, the Health Implementation Plan of the former Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement in the Northern Territory (Health) (now known as Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment) and programmes covered by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Chronic Disease Fund.

The Program objective is to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with access to effective high quality health care services in urban, regional, rural and remote locations across Australia. This includes through Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, wherever possible and appropriate, as well as mainstream services delivering comprehensive, culturally appropriate primary health care.

The Australian Government has appropriated \$2.413 billion (GST exclusive) over three years for the Program commencing in 2015-16. Around sixty per cent of the appropriation has been allocated to Primary Health Care Services and targeted health activities. Of this funding:

- \$1.4 billion will fund culturally appropriate primary health care services (primarily delivered through ACCHSs and other suitably qualified providers), including the *Healthy for Life* program;
- \$205.9 million is committed to the Care Coordination and Supplementary Services (CCSS) and Improving Indigenous Access to Mainstream Primary Care (IIAMPC);
- \$116 million for Tackling Indigenous Smoking;
- \$237 million to New Directions and the Australian Nurse-Family Partnership (see below) and child and maternal health initiatives; and
- \$46 million to capital works.
- \$12 million for Integrated Early Childhood Services (over two years)

The remainder will be allocated to emerging priorities in Indigenous health, including infrastructure, crisis response, mental health in a primary health care setting, and additional capital works.

Australian Nurse/ Family Partnership

The Australian Nurse-Family Partnership Program (ANFPP) is a nurse-led home visiting program that supports women pregnant with an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child to improve their own health and the health of their baby. The ANFPP also provides valuable support and advice to mothers that helps with the baby's development in their early years. The ANFPP is an important early investment in the future of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in local communities.

The ANFPP is a part of the Australian Government's commitment to improve the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with particular focus on maternal health and early childhood development. The ANFPP is based on the Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) model of home visiting developed in the USA and is an evidence-based community health program that helps transform the lives of vulnerable mothers pregnant with their first child.

The ANFPP is currently delivered in five sites: Wellington, New South Wales; Cairns and North Brisbane, Queensland; and Alice Springs and a hub and spoke model operating out of Darwin to support the Top End communities of – Wadeye, Maningrida, Gunbalunya and Wurrumiyanga, Northern Territory.

The Australian Government (through the Department of Health) has committed \$40 million under the *Better Start to Life* approach to progressively expand the ANFPP from three sites to 13, by 30 June 2018. The program has demonstrated positive outcomes for women, children and families by providing comprehensive support for antenatal and postnatal care and child health and development. As at 31 March 2017, 1,269 mothers have been enrolled in the program, with 18,579 visits having taken place since the commencement of the program in 2009.

DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT

ParentsNext (mainly aimed at parents with slightly older children but may still be relevant)

ParentsNext gives parents with young children personalised assistance including support and training to develop their skills, build up their confidence, and prepare for employment in a way which recognises their role as a parent.

Building on the success of the ParentsNext program trial, in the 2017-18 Budget the Government announced it is investing a further \$263 million to expand the program nationally, helping around 68,000 parents across Australia. The national rollout involves two streams:

- \$150 million over four years to expand ParentsNext to the most disadvantaged parents in all 51 Employment Regions covered by jobactive providers.
- \$113 million over four years to provide more intensive support in 30 locations which are highly disadvantaged or have a high proportion of Indigenous recipients of Parenting Payment.