

“PROTECTING CHILDREN IS EVERYONE’S BUSINESS”

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR PROTECTING AUSTRALIA’S CHILDREN (2009-2020)

Background:

Child abuse and neglect continues to be one of Australia’s most serious challenges. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare’s report *Child Protection Australia (2013)* states:

Substantiated child abuse and neglect has increased

- Over the 12 months to June 2012, the number of children who were the subject of substantiated reports *increased* from 31,527 to 37,781 (6.1 to 7.4 per 1,000 children)

Very young children are the most likely to be the subject of substantiated abuse and neglect

- In 2011-12 children aged under one year were most likely to be the subject of substantiated report (13.2 per 1,000 children)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children continue to be over represented

- In 2011-12, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children are almost 8 times as likely to be the subject of substantiated child abuse and neglect as non-indigenous children

Numbers of children admitted to and discharged from care and protection orders increased.

The majority of children in out of home care were placed for more than one year.

In 2012 - 13, there were 2,215 children in the ACT, or nearly 27 in every thousand who received child protection services. Of these, 1577 children who were the subject of an investigation, 544 who were on care and protection orders and 765 were in out of home care. In the same period there were 13,518 notifications concerning allegations of child abuse or neglect involving 6,431 children in the ACT.

THE CHILD AWARE LOCAL INITIATIVE IS A CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVE WHICH SUPPORTS COMMUNITIES TO UNDERTAKE EARLY INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION ACTIVITIES WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE AND WELL. THIS WORK IS BEING LED AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL BY FAMILIES AUSTRALIA AND THE AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR CHILD PROTECTION. LOCAL INITIATIVES WILL BE SUPPORTED TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT SUSTAINABLE LOCAL PLANS OF ACTION BY BRINGING TOGETHER EXISTING RESOURCES AND NETWORKS WITHIN COMMUNITIES.

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TUGGERANONG CHILD AWARE LOCAL INITIATIVE:

THE INITIATIVE IS BEING LED BY THE YWCA CANBERRA IN A PARTNERSHIP WITH THE TUGGERANONG CHILD AND FAMILY CENTRE, SCHOOLS, AND COMMUNITY SERVICES IN THE SOUTH TUGGERANONG REGION.

The Tuggeranong Region of the ACT has identified pockets of disadvantage with a number of suburbs with significant indicators of disadvantage. This includes the suburbs of Richardson, Isabella Plains Gilmore, Banks, Theodore, Conder, Greenway, Monash, Chisholm and Calwell. Of the four ACT regions it also has 24.6% of children who are vulnerable in one or more domains as assessed through the 2012 Australian Early Development Index (AEDI). This represents the highest percentage across the ACT. Tuggeranong has the second largest population of young people aged 10-24 at 26% and five of the highest populated suburbs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

The region has some services to support vulnerable children, young people and their families provided by the YWCA, Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre, community services and services provided by schools. However these services are spread relatively thinly and need to be more coordinated. Some of this work has begun through service colocation, partnership agreements and MOU's but greater coordination and collaboration is needed to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in the community.

The YWCA of Canberra provides services and support to children, young people and their families across the ACT but particularly in the Tuggeranong region where the YWCA has developed an integrated service delivery model at the Lanyon Youth and Community Centre. The range of services provided includes the following:

- Child, Youth and Family Gateway – the Gateway is a component of the ACT Government 1 Human Services Gateway and is one access point to services for children, young people and their families.
- Tuggeranong Network Coordination – the Tuggeranong Region Network Coordinator maps and coordinates services for children, young people and their families in Tuggeranong. The Network Coordinator works with both universal and targeted services including schools and supports the development of collaborative work between services to address service gaps and improved access for community members.
- Youth Engagement
- Housing and homelessness services
- Therapeutic services for children and young people aged 8-15 years
- Community development at Lanyon and surrounding area
- Emergency food relief and access to financial counselling

The YWCA provides leadership and coordination to support the development of service coordination and professional collaboration across the service system in the Tuggeranong Region and the ACT. The key services in the region have been surveyed through the Child, Youth and Family Support Program Collaboration Rubric to examine the service system's capacity and preparedness to work together.

To assist with this a Collaboration Rubric Governance Group meets regularly with the aim of growing collaborative work and greater service coordination across the region with the following participating agencies and services:

- YWCA of Canberra
- Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre
- Communities@work
- Catholic Care
- Cyclops –Anglicare
- Network Student Engagement Team- Education and Training Directorate
- The Smith Family
- PCYC
- Tuggeranong Arts Centre

The Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre is a “one stop shop” that supports families during the early years of a child’s life and assist parents to securing strong foundations for their children’s health, development and education. The Centre is staffed by a team of professionals that include social workers and psychologists who can assist parents with children aged from pre-birth and up to the age of twelve years. This is provided through a variety of programs:

- Parents as Teachers
- Parenting Programs and support for parenting
- Supported Playgroups
- Behaviour management programs and support

The Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre has developed partnerships with other agencies including ACT Health, Relationships Australia, The Smith Family and the Belconnen Community Service who all provide services at the Centre. The Maternal and Child Health Nurse Service also attends the Centre and provides access to midwives and counselling support.

THE TUGGERANONG CHILD AWARE LOCAL INITIATIVE ACTION PLAN

The overarching aim of the Action Plan will be to develop strategies to support vulnerable and socially isolated children and their families to form stronger connections to school and to provide parents with better access to the services and supports that they may need to better support their children’s development, education and wellbeing. It is intended that the initiative will be co-created by the participating stakeholder using an action learning methodology. The key stakeholders who will be invited to participate in the development of the Tuggeranong Action Plan will include the Tuggeranong Collaboration Rubric Governance Group and nine identified primary and high schools. All the schools are located in the South Tuggeranong Region. The identified schools are:

- Isabella Plains Early Childhood School
- Richardson Primary and Richardson Koori Preschool
- Calwell Primary

- Theodore Primary
- Bonython Primary
- Gordon Primary
- Charles Conder Primary
- Calwell High School
- Lanyon High School

The Action Plan will include a communications strategy to engage the wider service system including, although not restricted to Tuggeranong Medicare Local, other Health Services in the region (including General Practitioners), Australian Federal Police, the Tuggeranong Re-engaging Youth Network Board, sport and recreation services and clubs as well as the corporate sector.

The Action Plan will incorporate service mapping and coordination strategies with the aim to improve access to services and to non-stigmatizing community and recreational supports for vulnerable and isolated children, young people and families. Services and schools will document and share successful existing strategies and develop new strategies and tools to reach the most difficult to engage members of their school communities.

At the outset of the project, key stakeholders will participate in a facilitated workshop that will seek to understand and identify the factors that impact on families and that lead to disconnection and social isolation.

OUTCOMES FROM THE TUGGERANONG CHILD AWARE LOCAL INITIATIVE

The aim of the Initiative will be to achieve three broad outcomes:

- 1. A reduction in the number of reports to the Care and Protection Service**
- 2. Improved communications and collaboration between services in South Tuggeranong**
- 3. Increases support for vulnerable and hard to reach families**

It is also intended to document those strategies used to achieve these broad outcomes through evaluation and to disseminate the findings of the project to other regions in the ACT.