

LISMORE CHILD AWARE LOCAL INITIATIVE

CALI OVERVIEW

Child Aware Local Initiative is a capacity-building initiative which supports communities to undertake early intervention and prevention activities that contribute to keeping children safe and well.

Child Aware Local Initiative is a central priority under the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020* and the Second Action Plan 2012-15. Endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments, the National Framework represents an unprecedented level of collaboration between Australian, State and Territory governments and non-government organisations to protect children.

The Child Aware Local Initiative is implemented through partnerships between the community sector, Commonwealth, State and Territory governments.

The six supporting outcomes of the National Framework are key drivers to the initiative:

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 well being
5. Indigenous children are supported and safe in their families and communities
6. Child sexual abuse and exploitation is prevented and survivors receive adequate support

Key messages of the Child Aware Local Initiative:

- ▶ Protecting children is everyone's business.
- ▶ Children have a right to be safe, valued and cared for.
- ▶ The best way to protect children is to prevent abuse and neglect from happening in the first place.
- ▶ Children and families should have a 'voice' in decisions affecting their lives.
- ▶ Governments, communities, organisations and individuals can work together to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families.
- ▶ Children are usually best supported within their families.
- ▶ A 'one size fits all' approach does not work across Australia's diverse communities.
- ▶ Local solutions are required for local problems.
- ▶ Culturally diverse groups need culturally sensitive responses.

CALI LISMORE 2015 - BACKGROUND

In 2015, the YWCA NSW Northern Rivers delivered the Child Aware Local Initiative *Everyday Wisdom*, an intergenerational forum that brought children aged 10-12 together with local community leaders to share experiences and learn from one another concerning issues identified by and of importance to the children.

The forum aimed to:

- facilitate cross-generational discussions relating to the issues of healthy relationships, strong communities, and leadership;
- initiate meaningful conversations and deeper reflection regarding the challenges of being a young person today; and
- enable a two-way transfer of information concerning the ways in which adolescence can be a time to grow, become more independent, and establish patterns that support an individual to have a healthy sense of self as they transition into adulthood.

Coordination and delivery of the initiative was led by YWCA NSW in close collaboration and partnership with:

- *Young Peoples Coordinating Committee (YPCC)*: facilitated by the YWCA Communities for Children In School Support program, the YPCC membership is comprised of children (years 5/6) from two key partner schools. The YPCC fulfilled the lead role in the development and delivery of the Everyday Wisdom Forum;
- *Community Leaders Coordinating Committee (CLCC)*: chaired by the YWCA Communities for Children and comprised of select leaders drawn from across the local community, the CLCC collaborated with young members of the YPCC to build a practical framework to assist in the implementation of the initiative.
- The CLCC included representatives from the government, non-government and community service sectors; Aboriginal community sector; business and private sector; Local Area Command; City Council; Justice system, and 'everyday' community leaders.

CALI LISMORE 2015 - EVALUATION & OUTCOMES

The Everyday Wisdom Forum was attended by 160 children from 15 local schools, along with 35 community leaders. Evaluation of the forum and surveys of participants found that:

- 80% of participants were highly satisfied with the event and believed the initiative fulfilled its aims;
- 81% of child participants reported increased confidence to express themselves to a person in a position of authority;
- 86% of children reported feeling a sense of importance and satisfaction from being listened to by an adult;
- 78% of adult participants gained a greater appreciation of the importance of seeking young people's views in regard to the issues they confront;
- 82% of adult participants gained a greater understanding of the challenges young people face today;
- 92% of the Young People's Coordinating Committee members developed a new skill from participating in the delivery of the initiative.

As part of the initiative a professional video of the Everyday Wisdom forum was produced, including interviews with children and community leaders, and vox-pops and recordings of general proceedings. The video resource has subsequently been distributed among local schools and the wider community as a means of promoting the importance of Child Aware principles and raising-awareness concerning the significance of listening to children and involving them in making the decisions that affect their lives.

CALI LISMORE 2016 – EVIDENCE-BASE

It is now widely recognised that a child’s wellbeing has significant impacts on both academic outcomes and social development. It is also now widely accepted that schools play a vital role in promoting the social and emotional development and wellbeing of young people. As a recent and extensive four-part study on *Wellbeing in Schools* found, two of the key factors that affect the wellbeing of children in school are:

- the teacher-student relationship and, in particular, the positive effects on wellbeing that communal values such as sharing, respect, equality and cooperation can have; and
- ‘child participation’, and in particular, the positive effects on wellbeing that enabling children to ‘have a say’ can have.

As espoused in Childhood Studies literature, and as is increasingly being understood within the education system, to ensure the wellbeing of children the conventional understanding and perception of children as passive recipients of experience, who require protection and moulding by adults, needs to be replaced with a more nuanced view of young people as active agents in their own right, each of whom has a valuable contribution to make to social and political life.

CALI PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Primary Schools:

- Lismore
- Goonellabah
- St Joseph’s Alstonville
- St Mary’s Casino
- Kadina
- Albert Park
- Trinity

Government

- Department of Education
- Department of Family and Community Services
- Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Lismore City Council
- Federal Member of Parliament
- Lismore Child and Family Health

- Lismore Local Area Command (Police)
- Families Australia
- Australian Centre for Child Protection

Business Sector

- Lismore Business Panel
- Business Zone Representatives
- Lismore Women in Business Network

Community Sector

- Solid Mob Aboriginal Health
- Bundjarlarms Netball representative
- Rekindling the Spirit – Aboriginal Families
- Northern Rivers Social Development Council
- Jarjums Family Centre
- Northern Rivers Childcare Services