



Australian Centre for
Child Protection



Towards a Child Aware Movement: reflections and recommendations

Emeritus Professor Dorothy Scott





Adults' problems mean children's pain

The challenge of ending child abuse is the challenge of breaking the link between adults' problems and children's pain.

(UNICEF A league Table of Child Maltreatment Deaths in Rich Nations, September 2003)

Seeing both parent and child



And let's not
leave Dad out
of the picture!



Parental characteristics of children in care in Australia, 2007

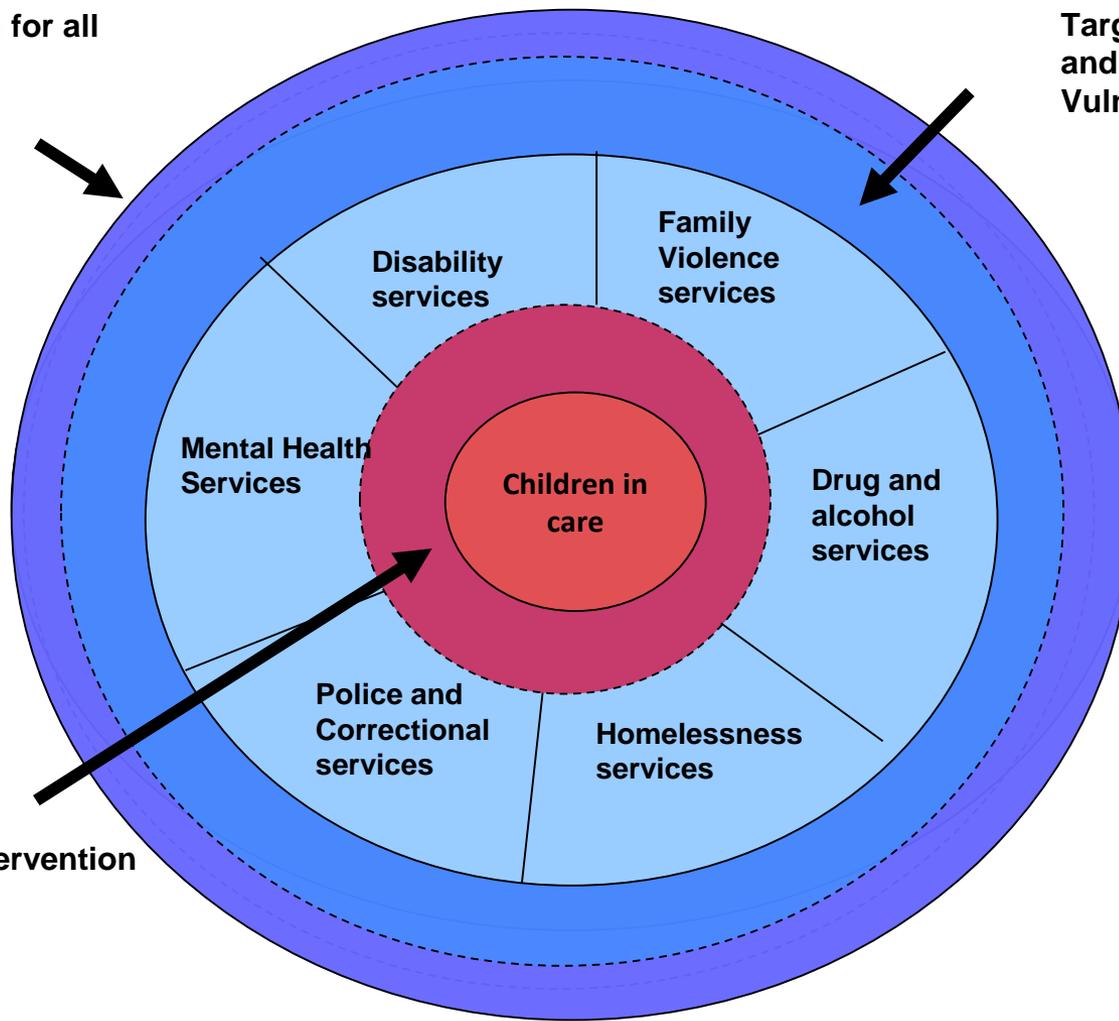
Parental substance abuse	69.4%
Domestic Violence	65.2%
Parental mental health problems	62.6%

Delfabbro, Kettler, McCormick & Fernandez (2012), The nature and predictors of reunification in Australian out-of-home care, AIFS Conference, Melbourne

Towards an integrated service system

Universal Prevention for all Children/Families

Targeted Prevention and Intervention for Vulnerable Families



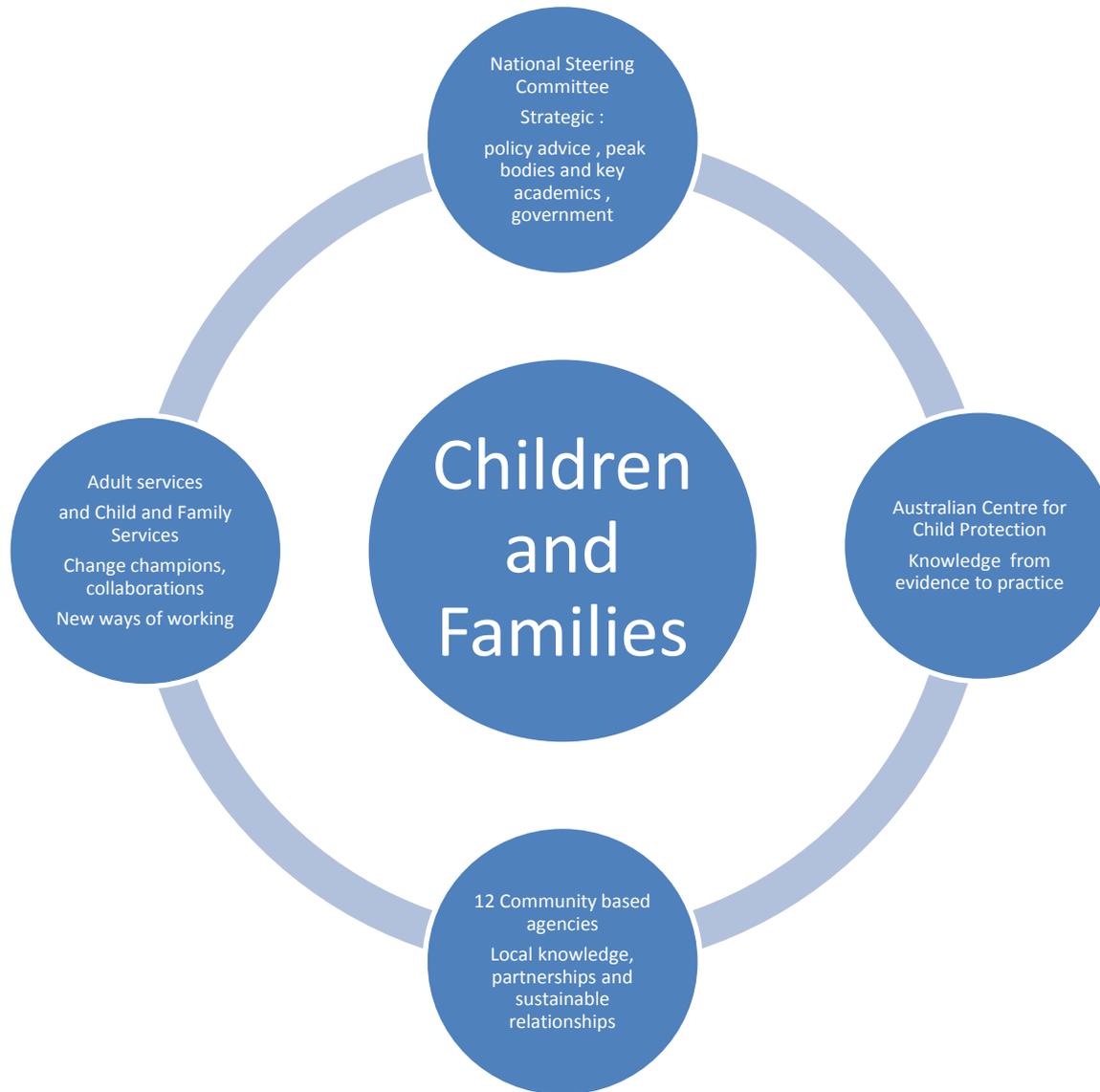
Child Protection Intervention

National Initiative

With funding from the then Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, and in partnership with Communities for Children, the Australian Centre for Child Protection implemented ***Protecting and Nurturing Children: Building Capacity Building Bridges***; a key initiative in the first three-year action plan under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020.

Objectives of *Protecting and Nurturing Children: Building Capacity Building Bridges*

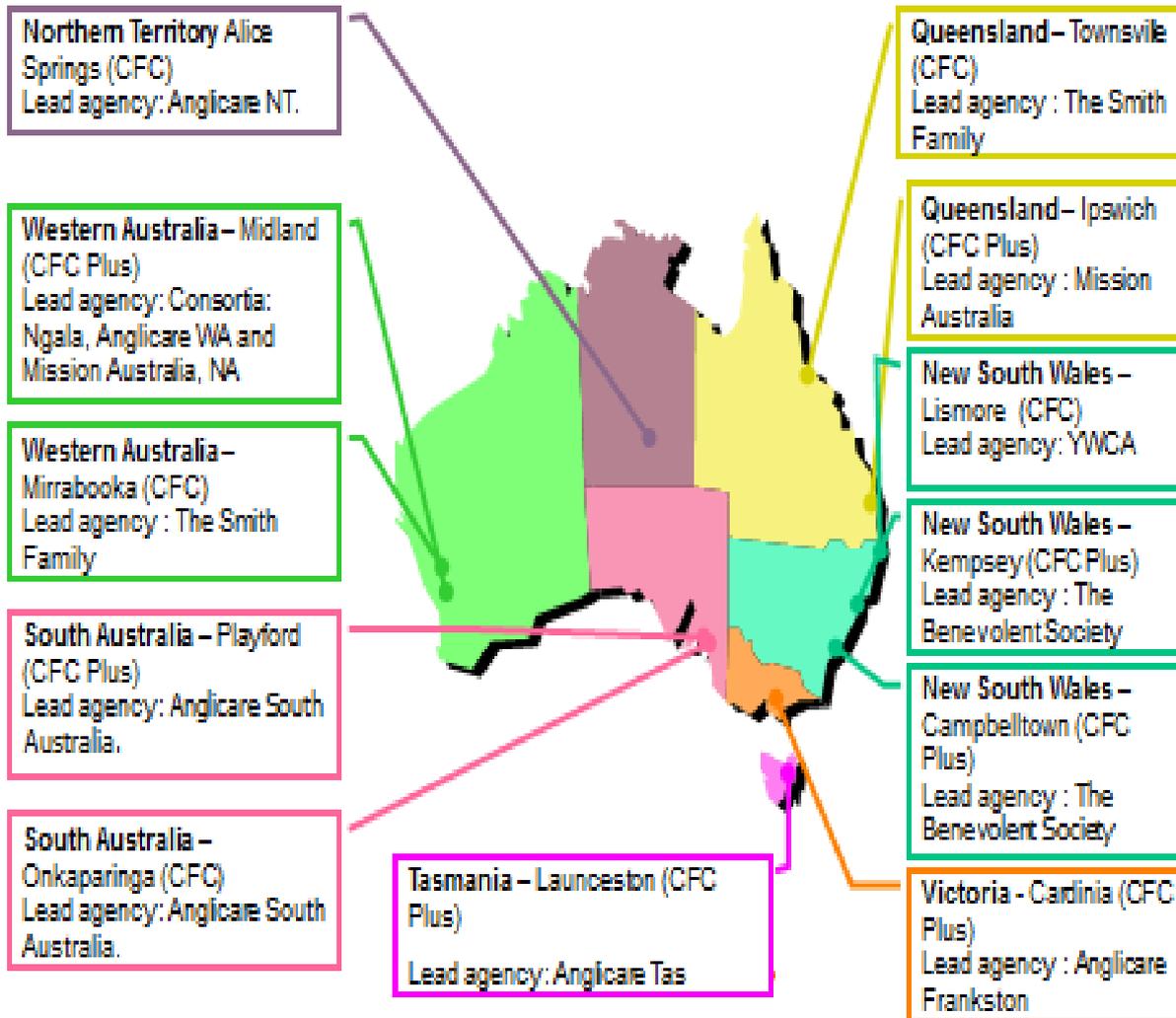
- Enhance adult focused services (mental health, homelessness, family violence, alcohol and drug treatment) to support parents to meet the needs of children in their care (building capacity)
- Strengthen collaboration between adult focused services and child and family focused services to improve the way that families with multiple needs experience the service system (building bridges).



Reaching out across Australia

- Fifty workshops have been held between April 2012 and June 2013. A total of 1400 people from more than 250 organisations have attended. Feedback provided by participants was overwhelmingly positive. A formal evaluation is currently being finalised.

Sites and lead agencies



Key Reflections - building capacity

1. There is some extraordinary innovation in family inclusive practice occurring in adult specialist sectors but there are significant obstacles to “scaling up”:

- Lack of conducive policy settings
- Limited organisational capacity
- Inadequate workforce development

Key Reflections – building capacity

2. Staff in both child-focussed and in adult-focussed services reported struggling with having “difficult conversations” with parents

Key Reflections – building bridges

1. Fundamental to creating and sustaining inter-sectoral collaboration is the trinity of:
 - The “authorising environment” (COAG National Framework as a facilitator)
 - Shared values
 - Organisational capacity

(White and Winkworth, 2014)

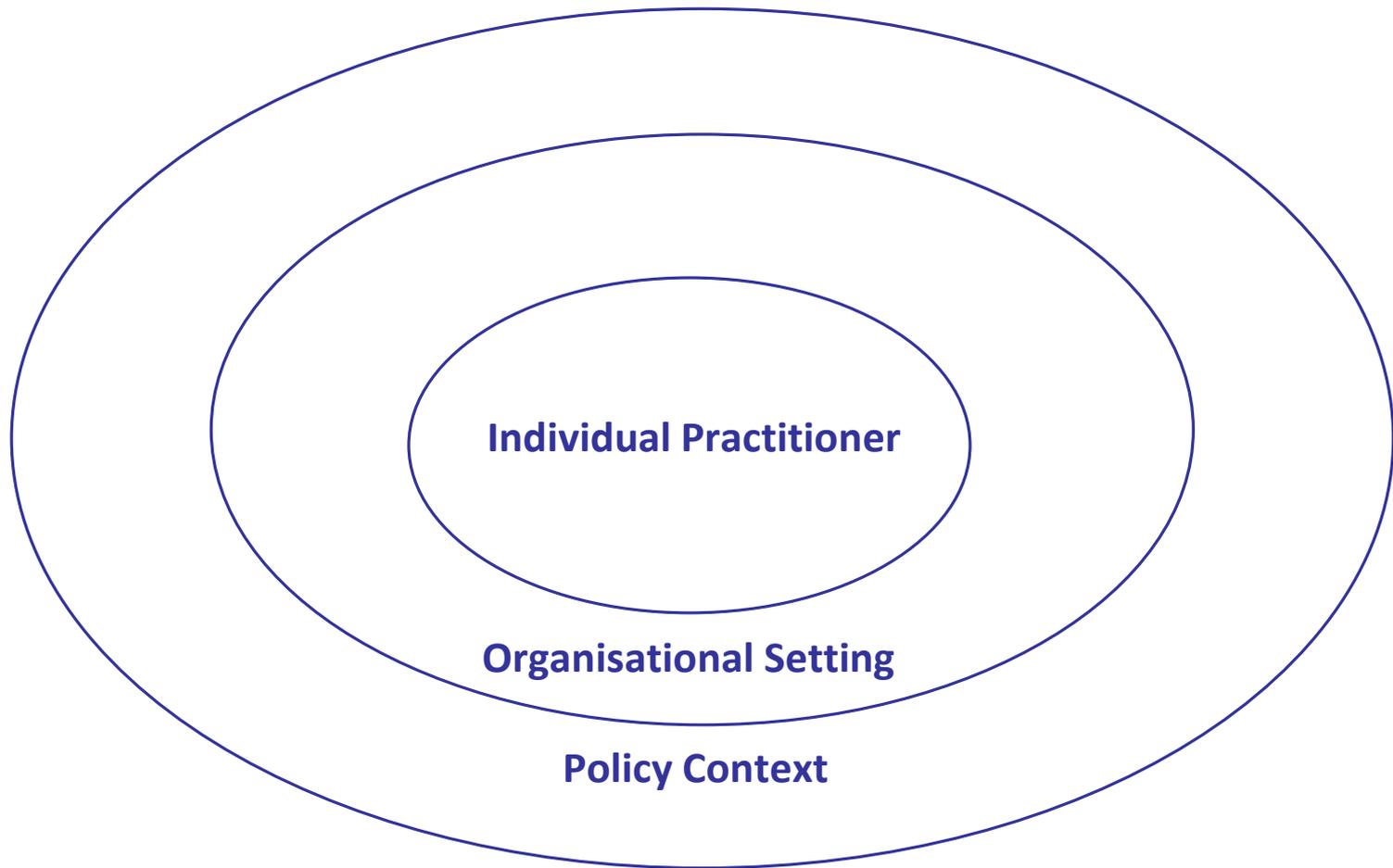
Key Reflections – building bridges

2. A community development approach is essential in engaging place-based service networks to build their capacity for child aware practices and to build stronger collaboration across services.

Key Recommendations

A Child Aware lens needs to be a national and State and Territory priority in relation to all legislation and policies. Children's Commissioners have an important role in advocating for this.

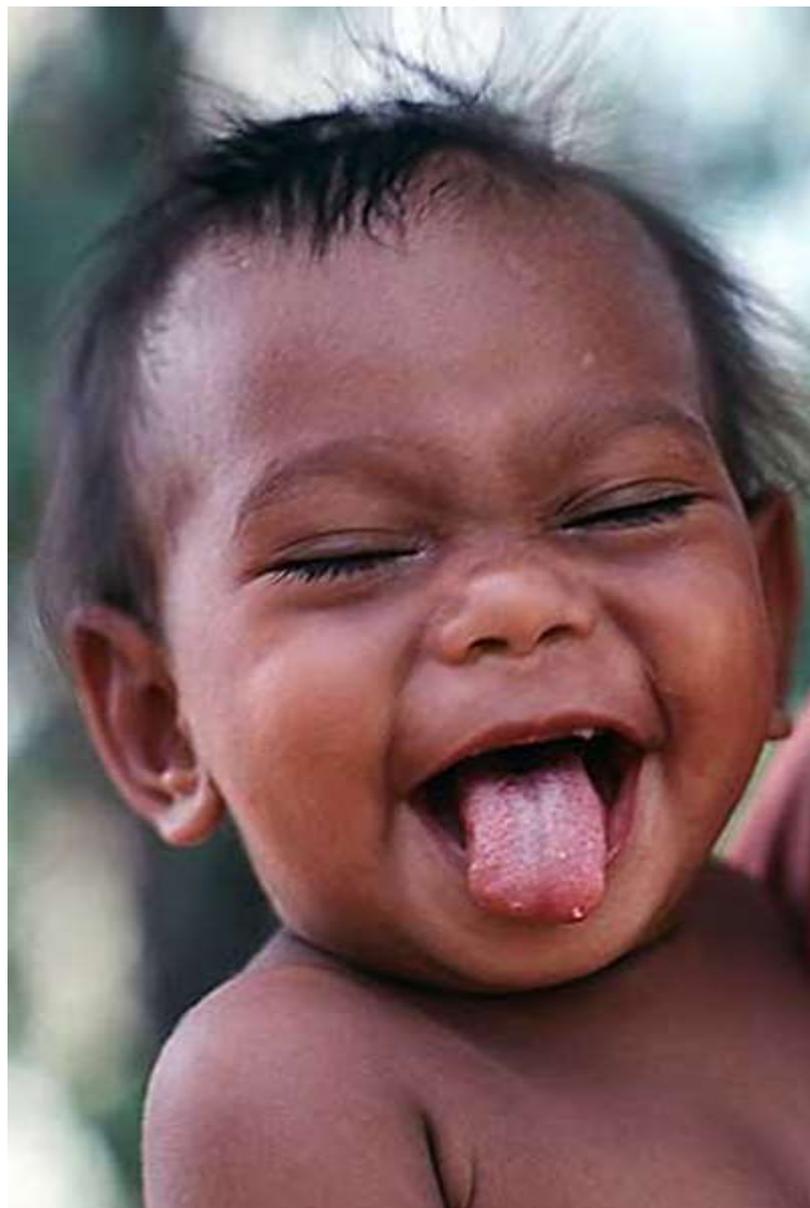
A multi-level strategy



Beyond Service Solutions

Adults' problems and children's pain cannot be solved solely by services. It requires population-based measures to tackle key social determinants, thus reducing risk factors and strengthening protective factors. The greatest single risk factor is parental alcohol abuse. It is time we collectively took on "Big Booze"!

May we sustain
our commitment
to work together
to create
supportive
communities,
stronger
families and safer
children





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University of South
Australia

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Improving the lives of vulnerable children