

# Children in Care Collective



## Submission to the Final Development Consultation Paper on the National Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse

### INTRODUCTION

The Children in Care Collective was formed in 2016 by a group of out-of-home care service providers and leading experts in working with children with complex needs in out-of-home care.

The aim of the Collective is to share experience, discuss best practice informed by research, provide advocacy and learn from policy and practitioner experts in out-of-home care. The Collective seeks to address solutions to difficult systemic practice issues faced by the sector and to improve outcomes for children and young people with complex needs living in out-of-home care. The Collective's website is at <http://childrenincarecollective.com.au/>.

Members of the Collective are: Allambi Care; Anglicare NSW South, NSW West and ACT; Anglicare Sydney; CareSouth; Key Assets; Life Without Barriers; Mackillop Family Services; Marist180; Settlement Services International; Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS) - Australian Catholic University; Australian Centre for Child Protection (ACCP) - University of South Australia.

Of particular relevance to this submission is that improving support for children in out-of-home care with harmful sexual behaviours is one of the policy priorities of the Collective. We have held two forums on aspects of this matter attended by overseas and Australian academic experts and senior practitioners in Australia. Details of these forums, including presentations and summaries of discussions, can be found on our webpage.

### FEEDBACK ON THE CONSULTATION PAPER

#### **Vision, objective and values**

The Children in Care Collective fully endorses the vision, objective and proposed values for the National Strategy as set out in the Consultation Paper. They are all clearly in line with the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and are reflective of a practical and evidence-based approach to the issues.

The Collective notes that Value Four refers to embedding cultural safety into practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, which is clearly essential, but that the values do not specify the importance of cultural safety for all people of cultural and linguistic diverse populations. Perhaps a clear statement to this effect could be incorporated into Value Three which refers to the importance of children's voices and experience.

## **Strategic priority themes**

The Children in Care Collective supports the identified priority themes. Because of its focus on children with complex needs in out-of-home care, many of whom have been victims of sexual and other forms of abuse and some of whom exhibit harmful sexual behaviours, the Collective is particularly aware of the difficulties in the current structure of support services for victims/survivors and for children exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours. It is to be hoped that work under these priority themes will focus on increasing services and improving coordinated multiagency work, including specialist services, and ensuring their collaboration with out-of-home care service providers as well as families. There is of course also a pressing need for improving access to therapeutic and support services outside metropolitan regions.

## **WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP**

The Collective fully supports the commitment to working in partnership with diverse stakeholders throughout the life of the National Strategy.

Members of the Collective have recently participated in the co-design workshops conducted by Nous Group in partnership with the Parenting Research Centre, on behalf of NSW Ministry of Health. These workshops focused on the development of a NSW framework for responding to problematic and harmful sexual behaviours by children and young people. The structure of these workshops and consultations was an effective way to engage with a wide range of stakeholders with differing perspectives.

With reference to the identified themes, the Collective would welcome the opportunity to be involved in the design and implementation of actions under the first three themes (Education and building child safe cultures; Supporting and empowering victims and survivors; Support services for children exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours). All three themes are relevant to the Collective's work with children with complex needs in out-of-home care, both at an agency and practitioner level, and as a Collective whose work is focused on improving the effectiveness and resourcing of the service system that supports these children and young people to grow up safely and well.

## **FURTHER QUERIES**

If there are any further queries about this submission please direct them to Roderick Best, Co-chair of the Children in Care Collective at [Roderick.Best@lwb.org.au](mailto:Roderick.Best@lwb.org.au) .