



ANZSOG



Systems Leadership for Child and Youth Well-being
A Joint Every Child and ANZSOG Project

Stage 1 Synthesis Report

Michael Hogan, Lin Hatfield Dodds, Laura Barnes and Karen Struthers

Every Child and ANZSOG Joint Project on Systems Leadership for Child and Youth Wellbeing

Stage 1 Synthesis Report

This report is available at:

www.everychild.org

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Report Title: *Systems Leadership for Child Wellbeing Project: Stage 1 Synthesis Report*

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Date: February 2021

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Suggested citation: Hogan, M., Hatfield-Dodds, L., Barnes, L and Struthers, K (2021). *Joint Project on Systems Leadership for Child and Youth Wellbeing: Stage 1 Synthesis Report*. Every Child and Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG), Australia. www.everychild.co

Enquiries about or feedback on the report can be sent by email to:

- info@everychild.co
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**We acknowledge the traditional owners
of the lands upon which we live and
work, and where we welcome and grow
our children and support our families.
We pay respects to Elders past and
present.**

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Systems Leadership for Child and Youth Well-being

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Foreword

Leaders remarks about the project

“What you've created is exactly what is needed to build the foundations of change. ... Your contribution to this project has provided for me in this role a kind of virtual “think tank”, and has strongly confirmed for me the priorities I need to pursue as National Children's Commissioner.

I remember vividly in my first couple of weeks in the job, that every day I was contacted by the media about some tragic incident. It was frankly, head spinning. And I realized very quickly that all of these things linked to systems of some kind that were failing our kids.

*My role is to work at the level of **all the systems that touch the lives of children and their families**. And this is what obviously this report and this discussion is going to. It is all of those systems.*

I see this project as a beginning reference point, which will become the blueprint to inform policy design in the future. All of this is incredibly important to the lives everyday of these children that we care about, and whose well being and human rights we're trying to uphold.”

Anne Hollonds,
Australian Children's Commissioner, AHRC

“The research evidence, and the economic evidence is very powerful about needing to do something different. We know what needs to happen. Because of the concerted leadership that there is behind this, that perhaps there is now an opportunity to transform the support systems that children and young people and their families are experiencing.”

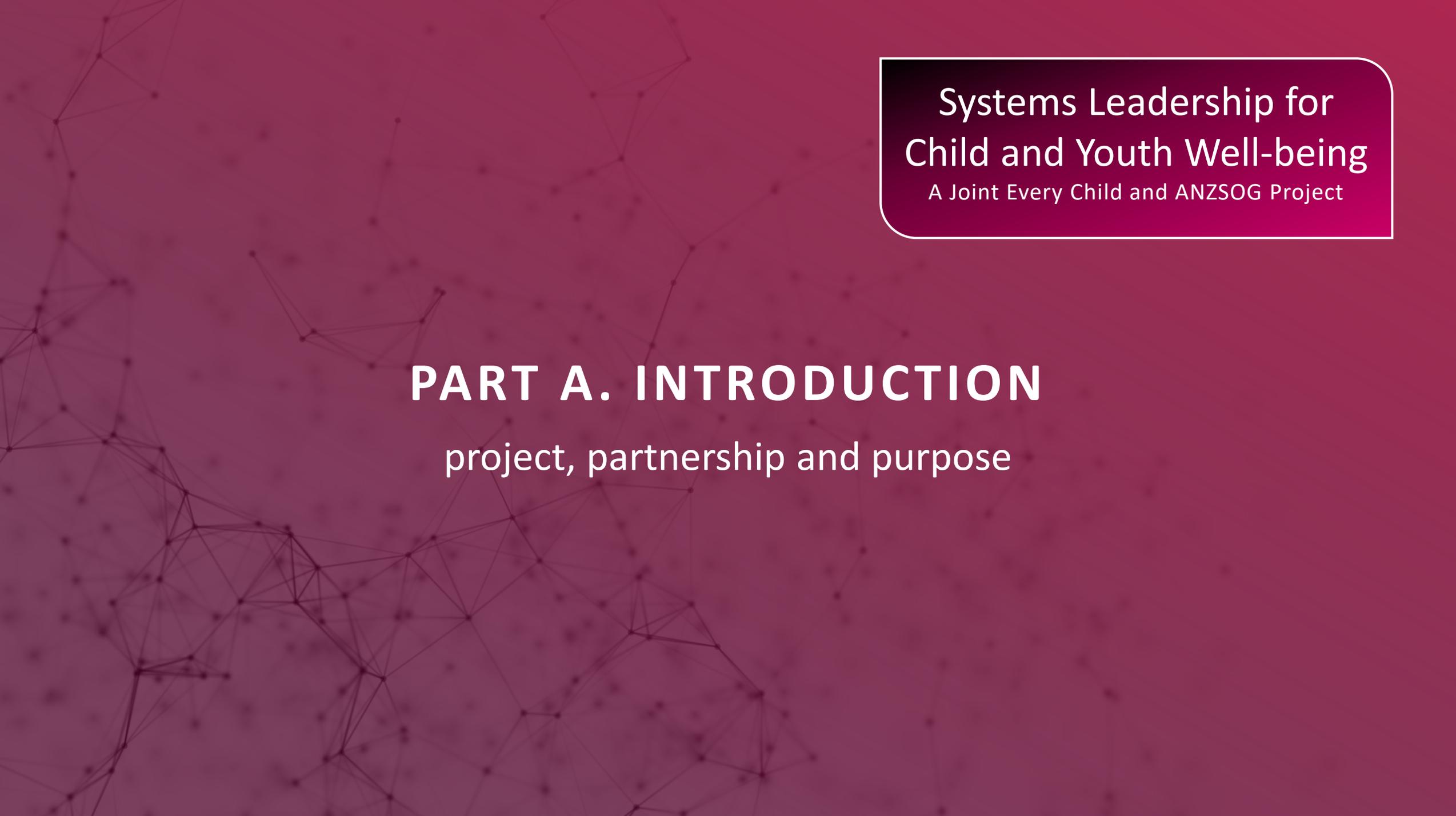
Leith Sterling,
Co-Chair, Every Child

“For a long time, we found quite easy, ... to sit back and blame the system, or for government to sit back and blame community or whatever. And we blame the system as if it's this inhumane thing that exists that we can attribute blame to, and abrogate our own sense of responsibility and ownership. And I say that because we, as individuals, we are the system.

And that's what I like about this report, I think it causes us to reflect on who we are as part of the system. ... If we can make our work personal, and contemplate who we are in the system - that can affect the systems that exist around us. And when we can make our work personal the questions will shift from “what do we do with this child?” to, “what would I want done if this was my child?”.

Then I think we're on the right track to making good progress.”

Chris Sarra,
Director General, DATSIP, QLD



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PART A. INTRODUCTION
project, partnership and purpose

The project

Every Child and ANZSOG have partnered to work on systems leadership to enhance the well-being of children and young people, and our nation's future productivity, prosperity and equity.

The project is centred on engaging senior leaders – through surveys, interviews and forums, across the public and community sectors, with First Nations leaders, and representatives from the tertiary, philanthropic and corporate sectors - to map, learn and strategise about how to address systems level opportunities and barriers to every child reaching their potential.

The project's purpose is to leverage the experience and insight of senior leaders and knowledge from the lived experience and expertise of citizens, practitioners, researchers, investors and managers, to drive improvement to the value and impact of our systems.

Systems leadership has been described as “leadership across organisational and geopolitical boundaries, beyond individual professional disciplines, within a range of organisational and stakeholder cultures, often without direct managerial control. Its purpose being the intention to effect change for positive social benefit across multiple interacting and intersecting systems.” (Ghate, Lewis, & Welbourn, 2013)

The project is focused on the opportunities for better aligned and integrated approaches across and within systems in governance, policy, programs, investment, workforce, community engagement and services and infrastructure.

The project's value proposition is that a 'systems approach' will make a difference to the outcomes that we seek to achieve, and our collective insights can contribute to the effectiveness and impact of leaders in and across systems - individually, organisationally and collectively, and at all levels, to drive improved outcomes for children and young people.

“ANZSOG welcomes the opportunity to support you as leaders in ensuring that all children start school ready to learn and leave school ready for further education, work and a successful and rewarding life. ANZSOG is keen to maximise innovation and systems leadership capabilities across the government and non-government sectors. Your insights and active participation can make a big difference in child well-being and our individual, family, community and national futures.”

Ken Smith,
CEO & Dean, ANZSOG

“The Benevolent Society (TBS) is heartened by the high-level support and participation in the Every Child/ANZSOG systems leadership for child well-being initiative. As the founder and primary funder of Every Child, TBS will continue to work with ANZSOG to harness the insights and engagement in this project to advance the wellbeing of children and young people through integrated systems change. I commend the commitment shown by all participating leaders.”

Jo Toohey, CEO,
The Benevolent Society

Summary observations

- It takes supported families and communities to raise a child.
- It takes good systems to enable families and communities to do so.
- Children and families, and the public, bear significant costs from poor systems interfaces and integration. A systems approach will add value.
- There's a huge body of evidence about what works and what matters. Our challenge is taking the 'knowing' into the 'doing'.
- We already invest a lot and there is no shortage of assets. We have a lot to work with, and we can do better.
- We have to share and shift power – with each other, and to families and communities – to create solutions and change.
- Institutional racism remains a major stumbling block. Cultural competence is good for everybody.
- Making a difference – family by family, place by place, cohort by cohort - is doable, if we work better together.
- We need concerted leadership and collaboration – at all levels – to enable us overcome the inertia and fragmentation we all experience.
- We're better together when we work across organisations and sectors.
- Let's focus on capabilities and outcomes rather than programs.
- Let's go local. Let's go early. Let's go multi-generational.
- Putting children and young people, and their families and communities, at the centre of strategy and delivery drives breakthrough outcomes.
- COVID-19 is extraordinary as an opportunity as well as a threat.
- There was remarkable consistency in leaders' system insights
- Leaders said that generous, inspiring leadership and strong relationships across organisational and sector boundaries makes the difference
- Leaders said that it's not so much which program will be the silver bullet; its how we assemble the component parts of better strategy, investment and practice - focusing on impact and results - that matters most, that restacks the odds
- Leaders told us story after story of our staff either all turning up to a household or none of us turning up.
- Concerted leadership can smooth out the rubs and disconnects, and provide space and permission for joined up efforts and change
- Many leaders believe that the future is more relational, more local, more digital, more self-directed and completely connected
- Leaders are not afraid of three sector solutions to complex problems and you're ready to work to lift your sector's capability to partner, collaborate and deliver better outcomes
- *Leaders were excited about what we might achieve together*

Summary directions

This report canvasses what's good and not so good about our child and youth wellbeing systems. It proposes key reform directions. By leaning-in to these challenges and opportunities, and working at a systems level, within and beyond organisations and networks, leaders can drive greater impact and value, shaping better futures for children and young people.

- **Make it national:** through a National Child and Youth Wellbeing strategy, aligned with ARACY's *The Nest* and state and local frameworks, articulated to the SDGs, and revamp roles and relationships across levels of government and sectors
- **Make it local:** boost place-based efforts that enable communities, services and systems leaders to engage, invest and change
- **Go early:** improve parent and care-giver support, transform early learning and care nationally, and enhance early detection and responses to early-life adversity and trauma
- **Go public:** through a concerted public narrative on child and adolescent development and family wellbeing to build engagement and capability
- **Disrupt disadvantage:** through comprehensive efforts to address the social, economic and environmental conditions, especially housing and jobs, that drive adversity and disadvantage, and perpetuate inter-generational cycles
- **Prioritise Closing the Gap 2.0 and support First Nations leadership:** sustain momentum with CtG2.0, support First Nations leadership and innovation, tackle institutional racism, build broader community and systems engagement, and advance healing, reconciliation and reparation
- **Elevate care-giving:** Improve support for the wellbeing and capabilities of parents and other caregivers, especially young mothers, as well as fathers, grandparents and other kith and kin
- **Make it about capabilities and connections:** make human capability-development, connection-building and caring the core of systems, services and practice
- **Gear our workforces:** Build diverse, culturally-capable, scientifically-informed, systems-oriented child wellbeing workforces with shared knowledge, tools and connections
- **Innovate and digitise:** Invest in cross-system and service innovation, integration, information sharing, digitisation and multi-purpose infrastructure
- **Knowing and doing:** Support transdisciplinary R&D, translation initiatives, implementation expertise, data matching and analytics, and impact evaluation. Listen to lived experience and expertise. Create spaces for cross-sectoral engagement and development
- **Money for results:** reengineer budgeting, co-investment and commissioning for outcomes, rebalance for more upstream developmental, preventive and reward integrated efforts.

Project drivers

Australia has a strong record of improving the quality of life for children and their families.

This has been built on foundations such as a 'living wage', the universality of education, health care and now disability supports, access to state-subsidised income support, paid parental leave, child-care, housing support, the promotion of children's human rights, and measures against violence, injury and abuse. It has also been built by generations of parents, professionals and public leaders. This record is substantial. However, it is experienced by many as not optimal or sufficient.

The latest UNICEF report on OECD countries, ranked Australia 32nd out of 40.

Our record for First Nations children and families is not good, though initiatives such as the recent refreshed Closing the Gap Partnership Agreement, and others at State and Territory or community levels, again carry hopes for transformational change.

In recent times, there has been growing momentum for another step-up - for the wellbeing of children and young people and their families to be core to nation-building. This is advancing a life course approach, starting in the early years.

This has been driven by factors such as

- the persistent concern that 20% of Australian children experience significant disparities, vulnerabilities and adversities that have immediate and life-long impacts on their development, health, safety and wellbeing, and
- more recently, the wide and enduring impacts of COVID-19 on many children, young people and families, and the opportunity to 'build back better' in our recovery.



32/40

= Australia's ranking for child wellbeing among OECD countries.



\$15.2bn

each year
= the cost to Australians of late action for children.



1.1 million

= the number of children currently at risk of poverty.



**In every classroom
6 first-time students
start school
underprepared**

- 12 if the classroom
is in a disadvantaged area.



1 in 6 children live
in poverty (ACOSS) with
their families forced to
choose what basic needs
they can afford
each week – rent, food,
clothes or heating.

Partnerships and People

Every Child and ANZSOG bring extensive experience in government and the NGO sectors across leadership, governance, reform, innovation and service delivery to this project. This partnership draws on the lived experience of children, young people and families and those that work with them across our public, community, and academic systems, and connections to many organisations, networks and initiatives working to improve outcomes for Australia’s children.

Every Child is an alliance of 70+ organisations and individuals committed to improving the wellbeing of children and young people. *Every Child* is a national movement calling for this to be elevated to a nation-building priority. *Every Child* is proudly supported and funded by The Benevolent Society and other contributing NGOs.

ANZSOG is a highly respected leader in public sector education, professional development and government-focused research. ANZSOG has a deep commitment to the delivery of public value through better government and better outcomes for citizens and communities. ANZSOG’s programs are acclaimed in building purpose-oriented, capable and effective public sector leaders.

The project has the endorsement of a number of First Ministers and the Australian Children’s Commissioner. It is also supported by the Minderoo Foundation’s Thrive by Five, and the Paul Ramsay Foundation and QUT through the Fellowship held by Adjunct Professor Michael Hogan.

Leadership Group	
Simon Schrapel AM	Co-Chair Every Child and Chief Executive Uniting Communities
Ken Smith	Chief Executive Officer and Dean of ANZSOG
Leith Sterling	Co-Chair Every Child and Executive Director, Child and Family Services, The Benevolent Society
Simon Kent	Deputy CEO – Thought Leadership, ANZSOG
Dr Karen Struthers	Campaign Director, Every Child
Michael Currie	Principal Advisor, Indigenous Development, The Benevolent Society

Consultants	
Lin Hatfield Dodds	Associate Dean, ANZSOG
Michael Hogan	Paul Ramsay Foundation Fellow & Adjunct Professor, QUT
Laura Barnes	Laura Barnes Consulting

Partnerships and People

Phase 1 of this project has been supported by the following organisations:



Project endorsements

Endorsements have been received from a number of First Ministers and First Ministers agencies, including:



PRIME MINISTER

MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER

ANZSOG—EVERY CHILD PARTNERSHIP

When our children thrive, our social and economic progress is assured. I commend the ANZSOG—Every Child partnership, and its important work to advance the wellbeing of Australia's children and young people.

The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister of Australia

November 2020

From: The Premier <premier@dpac.tas.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 21 December 2020 1:07 PM
To: Vivienne Seedsman <vivienne.seedsman@anu.edu.au>
Subject: Letter from the Premier, Hon Peter Gutwein MP

Dear Prof Smith

Thank you for letter in relation the 'Every Child' project across Australia.

The Tasmanian Government is about to embark on a State-wide consultation program for Tasmania's first ever comprehensive, long-term, whole of government Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy.

The new Strategy will be crucial in driving better outcomes for children and young people in Tasmania, and I have asked our Strategy team to make contact with you as we move forward with this ambitious project.

Thank you for writing to me.

Yours sincerely

Hon Peter Gutwein MP

Premier of Tasmania

Treasurer

Minister for Climate Change

Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence

Minister for Tourism

Level 11, 15 Murray Street HOBART TAS 7000
Phone: (03) 6165 7650

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Systems Leadership for Child Well-being

A society flourishes when we create opportunities for future generations to surpass our own achievements, and the NSW Government shares the commitment of Every Child and ANZSOG to improving the wellbeing of our nation's children.

The Systems Leadership for Child Well-Being project is a timely initiative that will make more efficient use of available resources to drive better outcomes for children. Combining the expertise of the Every Child alliance and the Australian and New Zealand School of Government, it takes a holistic approach to children's well-being across multiple sectors.

We all have a role to play in building platforms for our children to succeed, and I commend the Systems Leadership for Child Well-being initiative and wish you every success.

Gladys Berejiklian MP
Premier



THE HON STEVEN MARSHALL MP
PREMIER OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

8855365

Professor Ken Smith
Dean and Chief Executive
ANZSOG
PO Box 230 Carlton South
MELBOURNE VIC 3053
Email: anzsog@anzsog.edu.au

Dear Professor Smith,

I write to thank you, Simon Schrapel, Leith Sterling and Joanne Toohey for your joint letter dated 29 September 2020 regarding the Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG) and Every Child Systems Leadership for Child Wellbeing project.

My government is committed to supporting the wellbeing of children and young people in South Australia.

I understand you have been liaising with senior officials in my department, the Department of Treasury and Finance, the Department for Child Protection and the Department for Education about project engagement activities. I encourage you to continue seeking their participation directly.

If you have not already done so, you may also wish to consider engaging with the Department for Health and Wellbeing and Wellbeing SA.

Thank you for bringing this project to my attention and I look forward to hearing about the real opportunities to better align and integrate services across a variety of sectors to improve outcomes for our children and young people.

Yours sincerely,

Hon Steven Marshall MP
PREMIER OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

6 / 11 / 2020

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Project endorsements

Endorsements have been received from a number of First Ministers and First Ministers agencies, including:

'I am pleased to support the ANZSOG and Every Child in this important project working with governments, Aboriginal leaders and other key sectors to better support every child in Australia to thrive. The wellbeing of children and families is central to the wellbeing of our society and is an important part of our recovery from the impacts of COVID-19'.

Chris Eccles AO
(former) Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Victorian Government

"On behalf of the Northern Territory Public Sector, I am pleased to support ANZSOG and Every Child. The adoption of a public health approach to child safety and wellbeing reinforces the role we all play in our professional and personal lives to support every child to be safe and thrive."

Vicki Telfer
Commissioner for Public Employment
Northern Territory Government

As the Advocate for Children and Young People in NSW, we are proud to support this initiative. The wellbeing of all children is foundational to the wellbeing of our society and economy. This will be key to our efforts to build back better after Covid-19".

Zoe Robinson
Acting Advocate for Children and Young People, NSW Government

Project engagement

Stage 1 of the Project has engaged systems leaders from Australia and New Zealand across the community, government, tertiary and corporate sectors. Stage 2 will move from the 'knowing' to the 'doing' through collaborative and practical cross-sectoral initiatives.

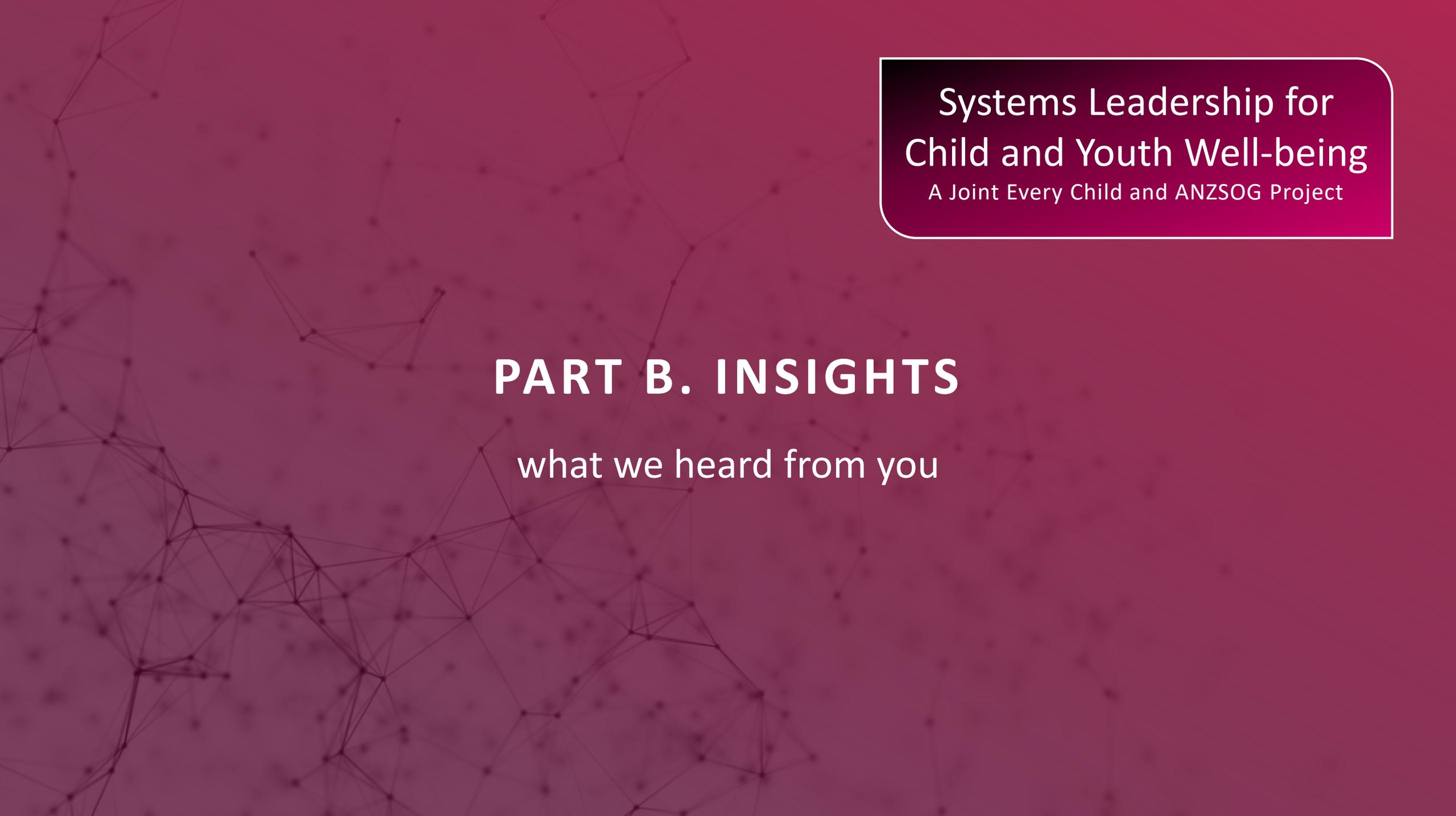
Stage 1: Synthesising insights and literature

- Endorsements were gained from a number of First Ministers & central agencies
- The project has the support of Australia's new Children's Commissioner
- Over 80 systems leaders were interviewed or surveyed, coming from health, early childhood education and care, education, mental health, disability, social services, income support, family support, housing, violence, child protection and justice systems and central agencies
- Over 60 of these leaders participated in a webinar in February 2021 to report back on the draft report and test preliminary insights, analysis, diagnosis and propositions
- Feedback before, during and after the webinar has informed this final report
- The project team reviewed and drew on a wide body of material on systems leadership, reform and change, and on child and adolescent wellbeing
- The final Stage 1 Synthesis Report draws together a rich resource of qualitative data of insights and ideas, presenting a synthesis of insights, analysis and propositions.

Stage 2

- Every Child and ANZSOG will facilitate collaborative cross-sectoral work on key directions and practical opportunities for systems leadership and reform identified in the report. See www.everychild.org for more information.





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PART B. INSIGHTS

what we heard from you

Key achievements

Leaders identified a wide range of significant, positive achievements and initiatives.

Recurring examples mentioned included:

- the Australian Early Childhood Development Census
- the national program for Childhood Immunisation
- the National Quality Framework for ECEC
- work by and with First Nations peoples and organisations, including the Closing the Gap refresh, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* reporting, the *Family Matters* campaign, and initiatives such as Qld's *Our Way* Strategy, Victoria's *Wungurilwil Gapgapduir* and others
- the National Disability Insurance Scheme
- NSW's *Their Futures Matter* reform, data matching and reinvestment program
- Child and Family Centres and similar hub models
- place based initiatives such as Logan Together, Communities for Children, the Bourke Maranguka Justice Reinvestment project and many others
- ARACY's *The Nest*, New Zealand's *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy*, and like Australian examples in Tas and SA
- the growing attention to child and adolescent mental health, and
- the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Key 'take out' lessons shared include:

- critically important factors like political and public sector leadership, expert advocacy, supportive coalitions and lived experience to creating space, focus and momentum
- making the case, getting 'attention', doing major change and implementing well is extremely challenging.



What you said:

Key achievements

“Another would be the national framework for protecting Australia’s children. Again, lots of caveats. Not a perfect piece of policy or inter-governmental effort, but it actually went somewhat to unifying a very diverse group of stakeholders. It may have stalled, but it did start some genuine work around child wellbeing”.

[NGO]

“I think childhood immunization and the approach – a comprehensive, national, public health approach. Our immunisation rates are world leading. I don’t think we’ve done anything better.”

[NGO]

“The development and implementation of the AEDC has been one of the most groundbreaking and enduring initiatives. Before that we didn’t have any data to galvanise communities to do anything about early child development. It was a game changer. It was co-designed. It was piloted. It was taken to scale. Now it is has recurrent investment ... it shows the power of research and evidence and political will”

[Tertiary]

“I think the two enduring things that made a huge difference are the AEDI and the Raising Children network.”

[Tertiary]

“So first I’d say Their Futures Matter in NSW, a whole of system program of work, and its focus on early intervention...When you look at the way in which government approached the big questions – ‘how do you really make change? how do you really turn the dial about child wellbeing? how do you get better outcomes for vulnerable kids? – they understood that you had to keep funding the tertiary end, but also that we had to do something fundamentally different earlier up the line. There was a working hypothesis that there were some pieces that were required to make a big difference - a deep understanding of what all the evidence and the collective administrative data that all of the agencies had - to help decision-makers work at a whole of system level”

[Govt]

What you said:

Key achievements

“What’s been so fantastic has been the evidence and data around child wellbeing, nationally and internationally. Things like the imaging data, psychological data, the cohorts, the randomized trials of interventions. It’s very, very clear. Now, we know that this is one of the most important interventions that a state can make to improve its future capacity as a country as a nation. It’s a very good investment. What’s come in has been that neuroscience, the social economists like Heckman, and the latest analysis saying, post COVID, investing in enriched, high quality accessible, early learning services have a huge benefit immediately on the budget. Now, we’ve never been able to get that data before.”

[Tertiary]

“The second thing is the recognition of the ‘voice of the child’, and bringing that into play more strongly. There’s a lot of rhetoric around this, but I do think there has been a shift.”

[Corporate]

“I can point to one or possibly two examples of successful systems change approach from the US. One of those initiatives was Communities That Care, which is really unique internationally, in being able to show that it’s a cycle of learning for communities of action, learning and measurement, and interventions based on evidence in a whole cycle that actually produces population level impact”

[Tertiary]

“I think the definition of ‘best interests of the child’ has been really important. Regardless of the jurisdictions, our focus needs to be not only on the exposure to risk but also the developmental components of a child’s growth that is really important, and that being quite widely defined in terms of psychosocial, developmental, intellectual, and all the spiritual and all that comes with it. That has given permission to think about concepts of cumulative harm, and look at other perspectives which we really haven’t seen before. So it’s not just about a safe environment, it’s also about a rich environment to facilitate the growth of that child on a proper and appropriate trajectory, so they can develop consistent with norms, and expectations, and have access to opportunities. So to me that that’s been really important.

[Corporate]

Key barriers

Leaders identified a range of key barriers – political, structural, cultural and operational – to making change to improve child wellbeing. We were struck by the breadth and depth of their frustration.

Recurring insights included:

- that our polity struggles with prioritising child wellbeing due to a combination of factors that include political/ideological differences, short-term political and budget cycles and problematic structural relationships arising from existing Commonwealth / State roles and responsibilities
- there are long-standing and widely held narrow cultural frames about family, parenting, childhood, poverty and diversity that constrain reform, compounded by a lack of a fully science-informed, systems-wide, public narrative about child and adult development
- the deep fragmentation within and between our systems that engage with families and children: fragmented and disconnected strategies, policies, investments, professions, organisations, programs, initiatives, infrastructure, and regulation
- our systems' historic and continuing contributions to the disadvantage and adversity experienced by First Nations children and families, and the perpetuation of inter-generational cycles grief, trauma and poverty
- the narrow sector specific focus of our systems and processes, and the limited development of cross-cutting frameworks, platforms, capabilities etc.

These systems-related insights resonate strongly with recent expert reports.

What you said:

Key barriers

“For whatever reason, the Commonwealth is always saying, children and children's well-being, by and large, is the state responsibility”.

[Govt]

“Program responses are not enough. Social determinants of socio-economic inequality and disadvantage [need to be tackled]...we're going backwards in terms of housing security, for example...”

[Stat Auth]

...we haven't got to a way of looking at risk and outcomes that are sufficiently sophisticated to be able to actually see the value and committee to that really intensive work with families over a very extended period.”

[Govt]

“We haven't drawn those systems together in a way which is underpinned by the collection of rigorous data and clear evidence of impact, not just at the individual level, but at the population level, or the whole community level...The best data, the best evidence and the and the funding, that's actually going to really shift the dial...we've got to aim for population level public health system change outcomes.”

[Tertiary]

““Every area of domestic policy – from transport to housing, and everything in between – touches the lives of children and families. ... Yet children are too often not at the centre of policy focus”

[Stat. Auth.]

“We must respond to the interface between systems...including the interface between family law, and child protection and violence...and between health system and education and housing ...there's got to be a consistent framework or consistent analysis of the problem and a framework for responding to the problem that's shared across the various systems. ...”

[Stat Auth]

“The challenge is operational rather than conceptual”

[Govt]

What you said:

Key barriers

“Benefits really come from linking up across portfolios as well as jurisdictions...Willingness from centrals is key but doesn't always filter down.”
[Stat Auth]

“The fragmentation challenges continue with the fragmentation of services across the federation. Some places get nothing and others have everyone piling in because there is little to no coordination across jurisdictions or sectors.”
[Tertiary]

“People struggle to scale. That's one of the things we've learned is what is more successful in trying to scale things...”
[Govt]

“There is a slow-burn human disaster happening with increasing numbers of children being taken into care, yet we struggle to find the will and a way to change course”
[ex-Govt]

“We need to ‘invert’ much of our current thinking and shift the locus of power to the families / children who are coping in a system that isn't working for them”
[NGO]

“So systemically...we need to be able to debate a different way of operating, a different way of investing, a different set of beliefs about the people we're working with.”
[Govt]

“Most fundamental is the disconnect between the state and the communities sector. If we connected all the dots many bad outcomes could have been avoided. Everyone has a piece of the puzzle - if we could bring the pieces together we could start to shift the system “
[NGO]

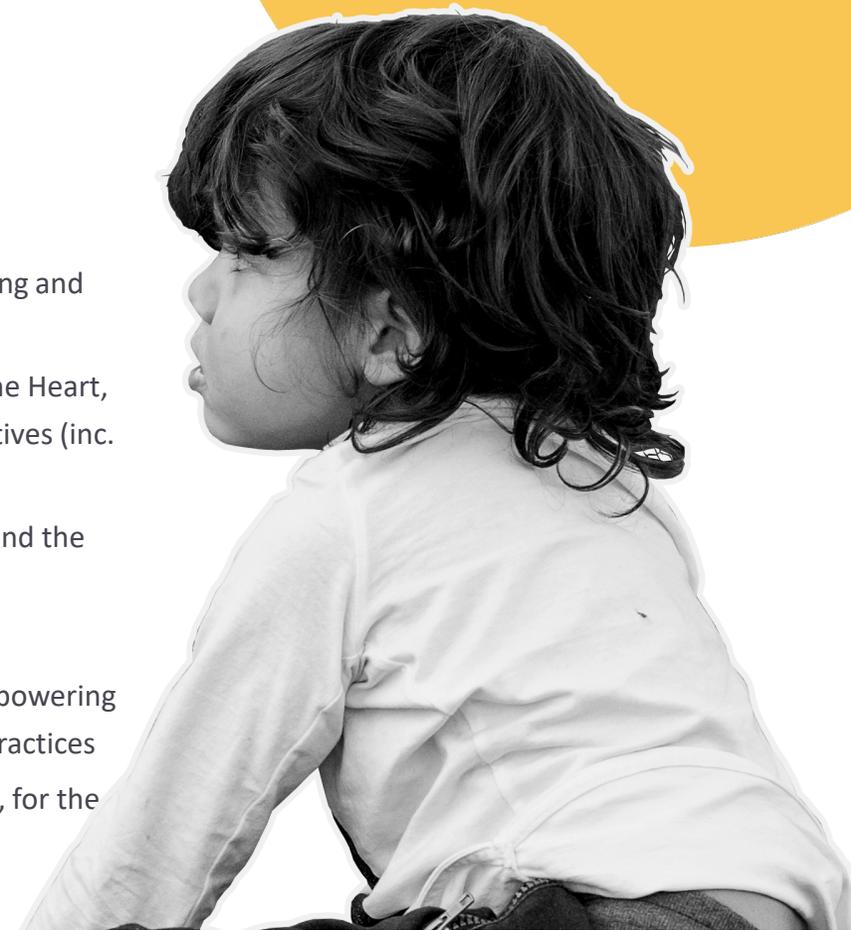
“...we know that poverty is much deeper than cost of living, but somehow we've lost that focus on the material basics. And the way that it compounds disadvantage.”
[Govt]

Closing the Gap 2.0

Leaders shared keen insights on Closing the Gap. There was very strong support for, but also anxiety about, what it will take to realise the aspirations of the recent refresh of Closing the Gap 2.0. There was widespread recognition of the leadership of First Nations organisations and communities.

Key insights shared included:

- when we do it well for First Nations children and families, all children benefit
- the critical role of the partnership with the First Nations Coalition of Peaks service organisation leaders in developing and delivering CtG2.0, and the need to more thoroughly engage local communities
- the positive context created by the broader public context of public consideration of the ULURU Statement from the Heart, the advocacy of the Family Matters campaign, the various community, organisational and State and Territory initiatives (inc. ANZSOG's First Nations public sector leadership)
- the innovations and results demonstrated by many First Nation's community organisations, such as the AICCHOs, and the opportunities to embed and scale
- the positive steps being taken by jurisdictions to share power and to reengineer service delivery
- the significant challenges associated with shifting a fair proportion of resources to First Nations' organisations, empowering families and communities, and continuing to build the cultural competence of mainstream systems, services and practices
- the need to maintain momentum and focus, and to build broader community-level and systems-wide engagement, for the transformational systems-level changes required to implement well and achieve the intended impact.



What you said:

Closing the Gap 2.0

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children inherit 60,000 years of cultural identity. It is necessary for systems to not interrupt this inheritance"

[Stat. Body]

"Shared design making is critical"

[ex Govt]

"Closing the Gap (gives a higher priority to ATSI children and families) and their role in decision-making."

[Govt]

"I think the other features of what makes it so compelling is that it's controlled by the people for whom those services really mean something. And so bringing in consumers, bringing in parents, bringing in people who are spokespeople, for their communities, for the disabled, for example, for the kids who are on autistic kids who have not done well, they can tell us what we need to do to have a better trajectory. So bringing in the lived experience."

[Tertiary]

"its putting community in the drivers seat ...it's really about the systemic reform through the notion of a high expectations and relationships, because that's really how our system comes to exist, through relationships."

And up until now, the relationships haven't quite haven't been where they need to be. I'm hoping that through this ... approach that they will get to where they need to go, like I said, causing us to have conversations that we've never necessarily had bothered to have before or we've never been held accountable to have.."

[Govt]

"...the beginnings of building the secondary system, specifically, co-designed with First Nations, families, communities, elders, with children and families in mind. And then using that insight into the tertiary end, I think is a game changer."

[Govt]

"Co-designed with First Nations, families, communities, elders, with children and families in mind"

[Govt]

What you said:

Closing the Gap 2.0

"In a broader context, it really is about people, keeping people connected to the elements of a functional community, rather than leaving them at the margins, or pushing them to the margins and beyond" [Govt]

"But we are kind of intrinsically, institutionally racist. And it's not because people inside it want to be, or that's their intent. But it's because its way the system is built. And so I think, the road taken here, the beginnings of building the secondary system, specifically, co-designed with First Nations, families, communities, elders, with children and families in mind. And then using that insight into the tertiary end, I think is a game changer." [Govt]

"Social justice and reparation principles and approaches do not feature and need to be more prominent The systems are unfair and unjust and treat poor children and families badly, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. That is truth and that is fact" [Stat. Auth.]

"NZ is different to Australia in that we have a treaty partner with Maori. They expect the Crown to relate to them differently. They have obligations and rights as the Crown does - these are reciprocal. Over the past 20 years as settlements have been reached with iwi, the relationship has changed and we are in a post grievance world." [NFP]

"So systemically, and it feeds into the question you asked earlier about just the courage to be able to step back and suspend our interest in retaining current arrangements, we need to be able to debate a different way of operating, a different way of investing, a different set of beliefs about the people we're working with. And maybe we need our own roadmap to reframe the relationship, and on following the money." [Govt]

"One of the attempts to drive a broader system approach that brings together the Commonwealth, the states and the community sector is Closing the Gap. In the Closing the Gap refresh, the Indigenous controlled organisations drove the process. Having those Indigenous controlled organisations at the table made a huge difference to both the priorities and the targets." [ex Govt]

Services and infrastructure

A key theme of insights about services and infrastructure concerned the challenges for families of navigating complexity, especially those experiencing adversity and/or interactions with multiple systems and services. Another key theme related to inefficient processes wasting resources.

Key insights included:

- there are continuing tensions and imbalances in our funding across universal, secondary and tertiary systems, that are difficult to redress
- we design and fund our systems and services in ways that make it hard to take holistic, longer-term approaches to the circumstances of families with multiple needs
- we haven't been systematic with integrated approaches to social services and infrastructure to create strong service 'webs', 'hubs and spokes', 'multi-purpose facilities' or 'pathways'. There are great examples using ECECs, schools, hospitals, CFCs, shopping centres etc. Scotland's GIREC model was often mentioned
- too much is left to frontline practitioners to weave systems together, who don't have the authority to do so, but they battle on with inconsistent access criteria, assessment and support tools, information-sharing and other organisational barriers
- our universal systems are not always great at servicing, 'holding' onto, or mobilizing other supports for children and young people with challenging circumstances and behaviours. Many families experience a recurring churn of referrals.
- there are many lessons from the NDIS that should be considered in and across systems
- the attention, including from the Productivity Commission, on student wellbeing and resilience is very positive, but there is more to do provide trauma-informed approaches across all systems.

What you said:

Services and infrastructure

"...restacking the odds framework...lets get basically the right dose, particularly in the early years, of three big things - home visiting, the right sort of parenting support and quality ECEC..."

[Tertiary]

"Strong services regionalisation is required, to build in local priorities to system reform. This is important because the ecology of systems change is broader than the public sector."

[ex Govt]

"We must respond to the interface between systems...including the interface between family law, and child protection and violence...and between health system and education and housing ...there's got to be a consistent framework or consistent analysis of the problem and a framework for responding to the problem that's shared across the various systems. ..."

[Stat Auth]

"it's also just a practice – its a way of being, its actually collectively coming together and understanding. There's a lot of imperative and drive to do that, certainly from the community sector at the moment, an understanding that going your own way doesn't work. And it needs to be whole sector collaboration".

[NGO]

"And so the outreach, the access, part of that through building relationships we've touched on. And I mentioned in the materials we prepared about the sustained nurse home visiting program, that's an example of a successful outreach program. So there's something critical about that outreach, access, and how you build those relationships, how that needs to be embedded in ways of working"

[Philanthropy]

"...we know that poverty is much deeper than cost of living, but somehow we've lost that focus on the material basics. And the way that it compounds disadvantage."

[NGO]

What you said:

Services and infrastructure

"Don't create new places where children go – build on the places they already go."

[NGO]

"People are at the centre of our industry, not our work. And the person at centre is an employment generation machine. A 17yo young woman with a baby will access Maternal health, Housing, Justice, and Social services. She generates more employment than anyone else but is the least likely to benefit from all this industry, particularly if she has another baby soon after her first. We are in an industry and can't see that we rely on their poverty to keep our jobs. She says I need help. Governments say, could you organise your needs by program and portfolio and level of government so we can help you. NGOs say can you organise your issues by our mission and strategy. No, she can't."

[NGO]

"Many programmatic offerings are effective. But to change a system you need to focus on the early years and ensure the pipeline of supports are in place to follow that young person through their life"

[Govt]

"I've been working with group of Aboriginal women, who are trying to get a better assessment before children get taken away. Ask them what the services should look like. And take notice of it. There's an arrogance amongst people providing services."

[Tertiary]

"Education and child protection are the two predominant lenses through which we view children, and neither go to wellbeing."

[NGO]

"Go where the families are – schools, health services. Instead we build new places for families to get the support and assistance they need. Community led responses with every family. Peer support at the community level – not all support has to come from professionals. Although much of it has not been evaluated".

[Tertiary]

COVID-19 and recovery

The COVID-19 pandemic and responses, their impacts on the economic and social circumstances for children and families, system or organisational learnings, and opportunities in recovery, were critical.

We asked what leaders would recommend to National Cabinet.

Key insights included:

- the extraordinary effort, agility and goodwill demonstrated in and across the systems, and within communities, dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and impacts on children and families
- concern about the adverse and enduring impacts on children, especially those already at-risk, of disrupted schooling, connections with care givers and friends, and access to services, and escalation of family financial stress, violence, child abuse and mental illness
- appreciation of the significant changes and investments with increased and extended income supports, child-care subsidies, service subsidies, and digital inclusion initiatives
- that jobs, houses and kids are people's anchors in communities, and that positive, integrated efforts in these domains have compounding benefits.

Key priorities identified to aid national recovery and improve child wellbeing, recommended for National Cabinet consideration, included:

- **sustaining higher ongoing income support benefits and addressing housing stress**
- **creating employment for workless families or families with insecure, under-valued or part-time jobs**
- **reforming early learning, especially cost, quality and access issues for early childhood education and care**
- **enhancing child and adolescent mental health, resilience and wellbeing, in conjunction with their parents and other caregivers, across all systems**
- **embedding service innovations and stepping up digital transformation and inclusion, and**
- **articulating a nation-building strategy focused on children, that pulls these and existing efforts together.**

What you said :

COVID-19 and recovery

"Given the impacts of COVID-19 on children and families, and more broadly, we can't afford to waste a skerrick of human capital or systems capacity."

[NGO]

"...to show the impact on labour force of that 20% of children who aren't thriving and the direct implications of that... would be helpful ...there's an absolute measure about life course impact between 1st and 2nd children of vulnerable single parents about whether an intervention successfully gets the parent into a job after the first child."

[NGO]

"Our focus at the moment is on two outcome points young people who: (i) by the age of 22 have had 60 weeks of exposure to the labour market; and (ii) live in a safe and affordable home are no more likely to be a welfare recipient than any other Australian...If the work exposure and the home are in place or have been experienced for 60 weeks, you can deal with mental health, addictions etc; so all our programs build from these two points..."

[NGO]

"Let's restack the odds ...lets get basically the right dose, particularly in the early years, of three big things - home visiting, the right sort of parenting support and quality ECEC..."

[Tertiary]

"Get it right for the early years, get it right for life."

[NGO]

What you said:

COVID-19 and recovery

"Post Covid world will give impetus to that. Post Covid world is alive with possibility. During 4-5 weeks national lockdown, whole system moved to action rather than policy. Working on the ground family by family was essential for results"

[NGO]

"The Government made a really intentional decision out of the childcare subsidy not to give access to jobless families. It was extremely deliberate, from a deeply held view, that they're not worthy, and that they shouldn't get access to it"

[NGO]

"...the Government had, at least temporarily, taken a policy initiative that essentially reduced poverty by 30% in Australia over night with JobKeeper and the higher JobSeeker rate...So there's the broader conditions under which families are raising children. Unless we deal with those, and move outside the infrastructure, and the service focus, it's really hard to say we can have a really sustainable change."

[NGO]

"That no one place, no one organization, no one department through this crisis, has been able to keep children safe, work with families, keep our workers safe on their own. It has been just this kind of social experiment writ large about how much everyone has needed everybody else"

[Govt]

"Covid showed us that we can do big things FAST. We housed homeless people in hotels/motels fast. We got money out the door to support people fast. We rolled out programs and practical supports fast."

[Govt]

Systems leadership and learning

Finally, systems leaders shared ideas about the individual and collective responsibilities of leaders in all sectors, what would grow capabilities for systems leadership, and what would it take to create learning systems and to enable change.

Key insights shared focused on the benefits and growth opportunities of:

- being able to work with political leadership and to influence the authorizing environment
- practical experience in doing complex, cross-sectoral reform work
- more explicitly recognising and rewarding responsibilities and capabilities for systems stewardship in program specifications, service contracts and job descriptions – being explicit about the characteristics and metrics of good systems
- listening deeply and reflecting on the realities of the lived experience and expertise of children young people and families
- providing opportunities to develop skills and behaviours essential for collaboration
- greater data matching and information sharing
- investing in growing capability for reform implementation and learning the lessons of evaluations and experience of reform successes and challenges
- acknowledging and engaging systematically with frontline managers, and practitioners at service and local levels. They are often most constrained and frustrated by systems issues, especially at the interface, and work hard to overcome and innovate through those - to make them work for people
- identifying and working with community leaders on the ground, location by location
- balancing the current emphasis on accountability arrangements with a more systematic focus on innovation, continuous improvement and adoption of ‘human learning systems’ approaches
- for bodies such as ANZSOG and other tertiary and professional development providers to provide cross-sectoral leadership development and systems leadership programs, drawing on innovative examples such as The Front Project’s Apiary Program and the Qld-based social enterprise Alliance for Leadership Learning.

What you said:

Systems leadership and learning

“Clearly there is a bit of an issue ideologically, ‘well, that thing, however you define child wellbeing. its a matter of for parents and it's not a matter for the state”
[NFP]

“Good functioning systems have good functioning community engagement that enables them to link in with the community and voices at the local levels”
[Stat Auth]

“We need a national strategy and Ministers for childhood ... Leadership needs to come from our politicians and our bureaucrats...we need a champion.”
[NFP]

“You have to have leadership – in government at least by a Minister and, at best, directly by or with the support of the Premier or Prime Minister.”
[Govt]

“Fragmentation is inevitable with Federation, but the issue is how well we overcome that.”
[NFP]

“What you need is a shared sense of purpose and commitment. And a shared sense of authority to get on and make the work happen”
[Govt]

“...[we need] buy in at the top, shared accountability...a different appetite for risk, and a different appetite for making a difference, not in an incremental way...”
[Govt]

“Willingness from centrals is key but doesn't always filter down.”
[Stat Auth]

“The fragmentation challenges continue with the fragmentation of services across the federation. Some places get nothing and others have everyone piling in because there is little to no coordination across jurisdictions or sectors.”
[ex-Govt]

“Focus on just a few effective things. Coordination and integration is helped by money. Combined budget bids help people come together. That's also aided by having a child and youth wellbeing strategy in NZ. Its power is in the indicators to be developed over time. What gets measured gets done. Making sure we are measuring the RIGHT THINGS is really important – DATA is vital.”
[NFP]

What you said:

Systems leadership and learning

"We haven't drawn those systems together in a way which is underpinned by the collection of rigorous data and clear evidence of impact, not just at the individual level, but at the population level, or the whole community level...The best data, the best evidence and the and the funding, that's actually going to really shift the dial...we've got to aim for population level public health system change outcomes."

[Tertiary]

"How you use data and information matters - how you use data to drive local change matters. People need to be able to use data to talk about their local children.... Build democratic data platforms."

[Stat Auth]

"Systems leadership for child well being needs to give a voice to children. And we need to value that voice. When they did the child wellbeing strategy in New Zealand, they started with a certain range of domains. And then when they went out and actually engaged children and young people, as a result they added a whole additional domain about belonging. It was something that mattered a lot in terms of their own well being, but something that was invisible to the adults in the system."

[NGO]

"I think the answer is, its all about relationships, relationships, relationships. You know, building alliances long before you need them, so you can activate them when you actually need them. And that's not about systems or structures. That's about the human nature of work and influence".

[Govt]

"The need for key political allies – they are the only ones who can buy you some time...where the politicians have done that, the public have followed. With out that it is hard for public servants to influence the narrative"

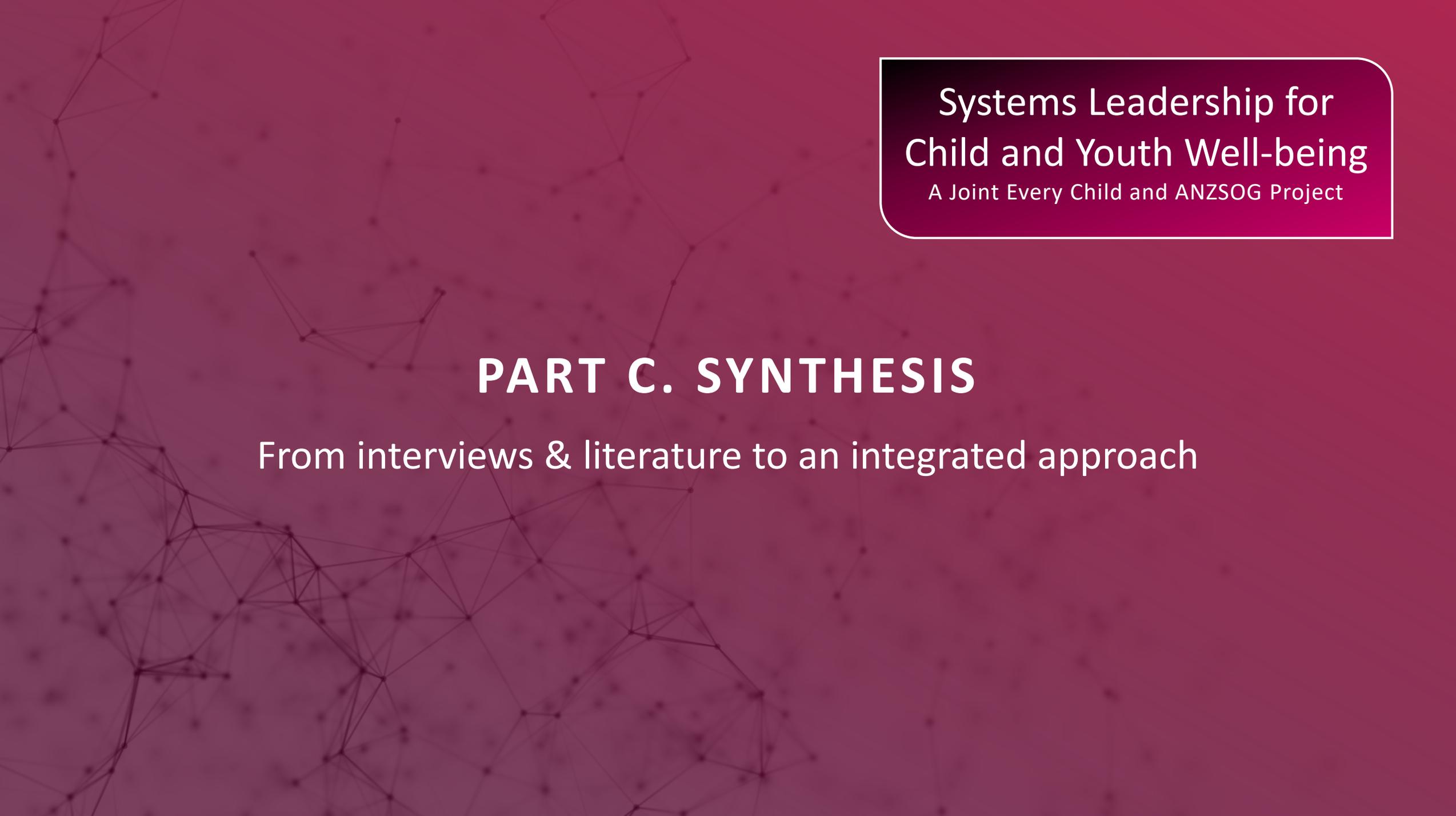
[Govt]

"Get it right for the early years, get it right for life."

[NGO]

"Benefits really come from linking up across portfolios as well as jurisdictions.... The Commonwealth and the states collect different data. Comprehensive connecting of national level payments data to state level service data is critical to be able to see the whole story. The control on data isn't privacy; it's about finding ways to connect across systems and data sets."

[Stat Auth]



**Systems Leadership for
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PART C. SYNTHESIS

From interviews & literature to an integrated approach

Toward an integrated approach

There is a huge body and emerging synthesis of knowledge about systems, child development, community wellbeing, and their criticality to national productivity, prosperity and equity. Some of the many useful frames that demonstrate an integrated approach are represented here. Others are referenced in Appendix 2.

Key points are:

- the emerging discipline and evidence regarding systems thinking, systems change, systems leadership, and implementation science provides powerful insights into the conditions for reform and program success
- the significant advances in biological, psychological and social sciences in child, family and community development (esp. neuroscience) explaining inter-connections and life-long consequences of childhood relationships, experiences and environments
- the advances in understanding how socio-economic circumstances, structural inequalities, cultural frames, political drivers, and the organisation of services and supports - the 'systems and elements' - 'set the odds' for children
- the strong support for a 'public health' approach to child health, development and safety: population-based, proportionate and progressive, prevention focused, partnership-based and practice aligned
- this body of knowledge has been adopted by UNICEF, OECD, WHO, The Lancet, US National Academies of Sciences, Medicine and Engineering, Harvard Center on the Developing Child and others, and by Australian and New Zealand entities such as the Productivity Commission, ARACY, SNAICC/Family Matters, MCRI, Telethon Kids Institute/CoLab, Minderoo / Thrive By Five, Families Australia, Paul Ramsay Foundation, The Front Project, AIHW, AIFS, AHRC, CEDA
- this is also reflected in the framing of the UN Sustainable Development Goals
- Australia has an early and robust example in ARACY's (2014) *The Nest Action Agenda: A National Plan for Child and Youth Wellbeing*
- there are recent examples of national expression in New Zealand's (2019) *Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework & Strategy*, and in Australia in the *Child and Youth Wellbeing Frameworks* in TAS & SA
- there are an many local initiative taking this systems and outcomes-based approach s, such as Logan Together
- a great provincial-level applied example in the Canadian Alberta Family Wellness Initiative.

“At the individual level, policies can focus on skill building for both kids and adults; at the human services level, they might focus on the critical place of relationships in promoting healthy development, supportive parenting, and economic productivity; and at the systemic or societal level, policies can emphasize reducing sources of stress that create lifelong challenges for children and make it extraordinarily difficult for adults to thrive as parents and breadwinners.”

Harvard University Center on the Developing Child (2017) *Three Principles to improve Outcomes for Children and Families.*

<http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu>

Toward an integrated approach

Every Child, ARACY and many others are working jointly to build awareness and support for a holistic, developmental approach to child and family wellbeing.

This can bridge families' aspirations with local, state, national and global commitments.

Some jurisdictions, and many organisations, have already committed to or are aligning their strategies with ARACY's 2014 *The Nest In Action* and *The Common Approach* framework. This is being extended with the *It Takes Six* materials.

There would be a significant dividend from our systems and organisations cohering behind a well-supported, evidence-based and integrated agenda and outcomes framework. This would facilitate alignment across sectors and organisations, between policy and practice, and across our child and family workforces. It would also facilitate vertical alignment of local, state and national efforts.

Fig. 1:

Every Child & ARACY (2020) *It Takes Six*. The Nest in Action (draft) material

see: www.everychild.co & www.aracy.org.au



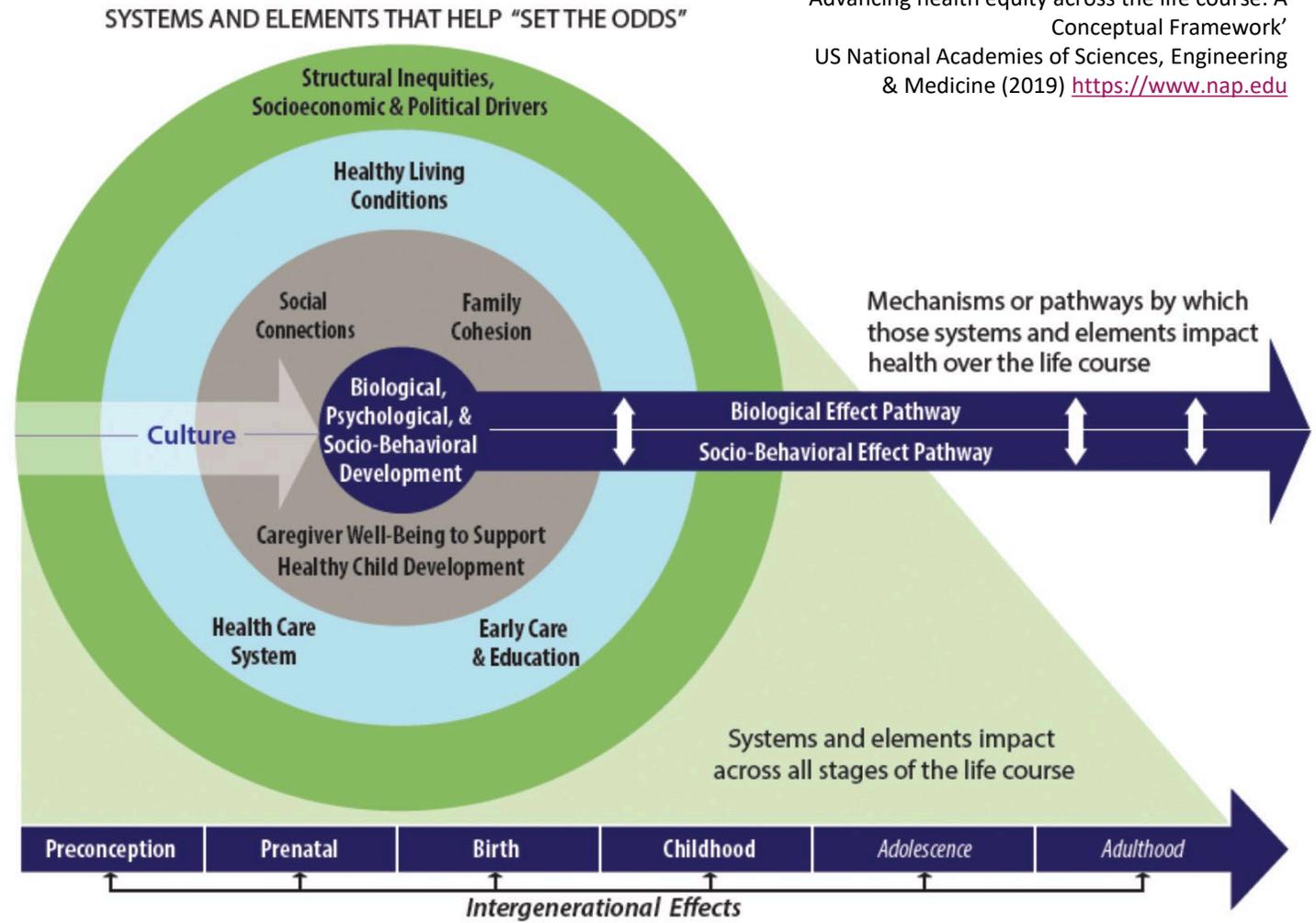
Toward an integrated approach

The US National Academies of Sciences, Engineering & Medicine (NASEM) in late 2019 issued a comprehensive synthesis of the latest science and evidence about healthy child development and health and wellbeing disparities.

The framework demonstrates the 'systems and elements' that 'set the odds' for children. This builds off globally recognised models of child wellbeing and systems change (including ARACY's *The Nest*), linking the structural, political and socio-economic context with the living conditions, family and social circumstances, and relationships critical to healthy biological, psychological and socio-behavioural development.

Significantly, NASEM added a life-course and inter-generational dimension, highlighting caregiver wellbeing.

Fig. 2:
'Advancing health equity across the life course: A Conceptual Framework'
US National Academies of Sciences, Engineering & Medicine (2019) <https://www.nap.edu>



Toward an integrated approach

There have been many learnings from our COVID-19 response in Australia and New Zealand. In particular, this has demonstrated the critical importance and benefits of:

- strong and collaborative political and sectoral leadership;
- commitment to listen to science and to follow expert advice;
- public engagement in prevention and rapid response; and
- strong public health, care and other systems.

Child wellbeing and the prevention of, and early intervention in, adversity, trauma and abuse, deserves a like, bold response.

Over the past decade, experts have been framing and advocating for a 'public health' or population approach to supporting families and preventing adversity and abuse. This combines early intervention with primary prevention strategies designed to reach whole populations. These are more likely to reach those who need it, be non-stigmatising, help normalise help seeking behaviours and help improve other outcomes.

Fig. 3:

Professor Daryl Higgins, ACU Institute of Child Protection Studies (2019)
https://www.acu.edu.au/-/media/feature/pagecontent/richtext/about-acu/institutes-academies-and-centres/icps/_docs/d-higgins-ey-summit-20200311.pdf?la=en&hash=A140207B25EEE708A4EFA15795BFF7B3%20



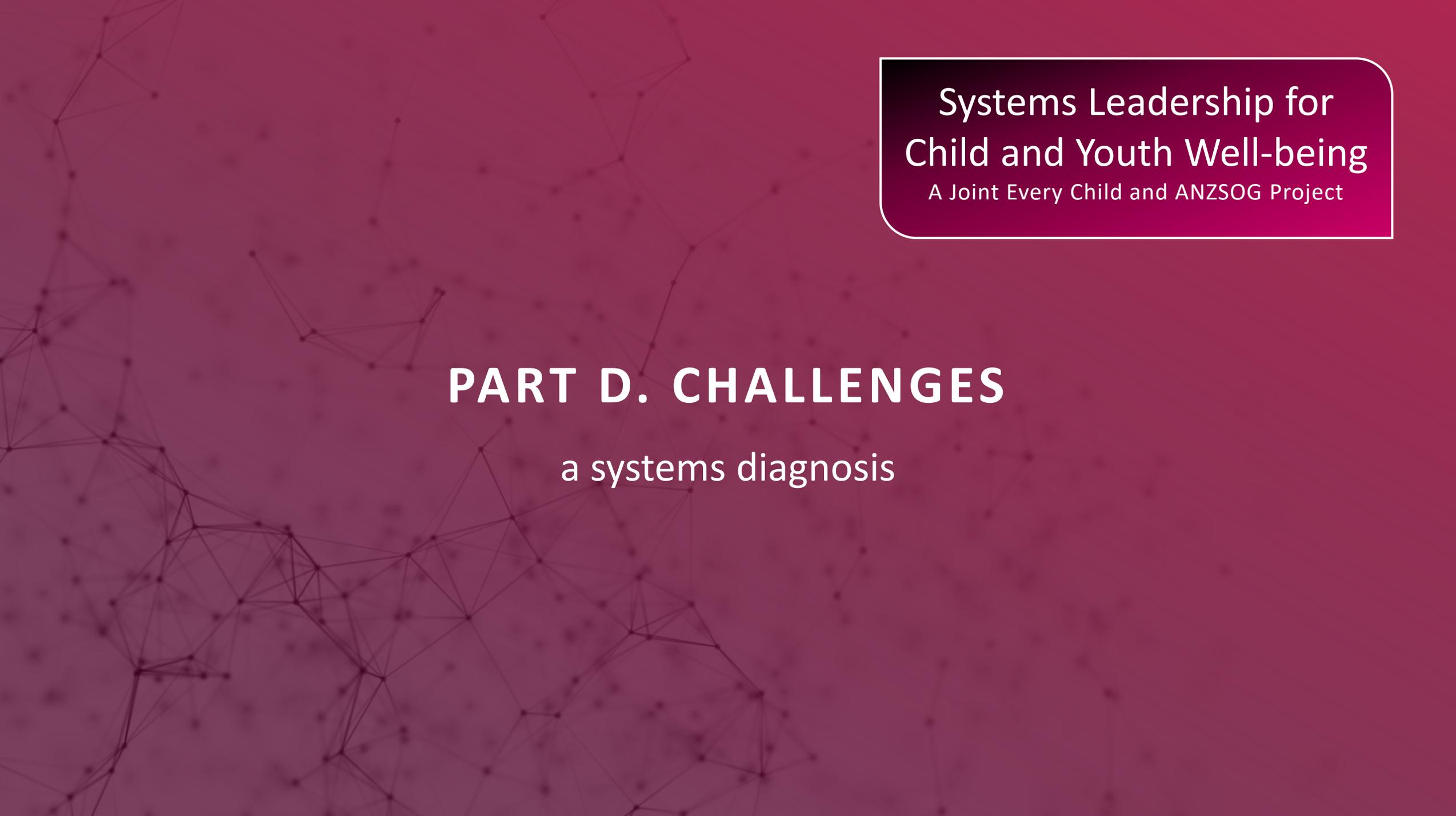
Toward an integrated approach

Consistent with the ARACY & Every Child 'It Takes Six' agenda, many priorities for national recovery and improved child wellbeing – that together can 'shift the dial' – were identified and recommended for National Cabinet consideration.

There were 'big ticket items' (below), as well as many systems reform opportunities (see Part E). These will have most impact if advanced as a package; even more so if done well together, especially at a place level. The 'big ticket' items are:

- address **housing stress**
- create **employment** for workless families or families with insecure, under-valued jobs or who are under-employed, and for young people
- sustain higher **income support**
- address **climate change and sustainability**
- fix the affordability, accessibility, quality and linkages of **early childhood development** services, and make them universal and proportionate to need to be beneficial for all children and families
- better support **parents and other care-givers**
- enhance **child and adolescent brain and mental health**, resilience and wellbeing
- embed service innovations and step-up **digital transformation and inclusion**
- articulate a multi-sector **nation-building strategy** focused on children and young people and their families.





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PART D. CHALLENGES

a systems diagnosis

Challenges with our child wellbeing systems

Australia is fortunate to have relatively high standards of living, robust and capable systems, committed leaders and workforces, and supportive and active communities, that do much good for children and families.

Yet significant disparities and avoidable adversities endure.

There is deep frustration about the gaps and rubs in our systems, and a widely shared view that we can do much better.

As a nation, we do not currently have a systemic & coordinated approach to child well-being:

- We do not have a coherent, holistic or concerted national strategy, framework or plan for child and family wellbeing
- Our current child-related national strategies – in areas such as health, education, child protection, ECEC, disability and mental health – do not yet link well enough or sufficiently drive joined up responses
- We are lagging comparable OECD countries.
- Our systems are failing far too many First Nations children and families.
- Our capability and governance for systems approaches is immature.

Our systems are designed largely to react, not to prevent or restore:

- We do not have the policy, investment or institutional settings in place to effectively prevent or disrupt inter-generational cycles of disadvantage.
- Early learning and child-care is costly to families or limited for those with most need, and along with other sectors, is not yet well integrated as an early childhood development system
- Too often, we do not act early enough for children and families who need it most, especially from pre-pregnancy through the first 2000 days
- We rely too heavily on expensive tertiary interventions and under-invest in services that are preventive and restorative. We could do better to support all parents.
- Our systems do not readily enable early identification and intervention, and ‘right servicing and supports’ to diminish risk and boost protective factors.

Challenges with our child wellbeing systems

Our systems typically have a singular focus, a short-term and narrow view, and are not as well linked as necessary:

- Our systems are highly fragmented and disjointed and are poorly coordinated at strategic or practical levels.
- Our systems tend to be designed for a short-term approach and to take a narrow view of the biological and social context.
- Capabilities and platforms to join up, navigate or broker pathways across systems are under-developed.
- We rely too much on individuals, and individual organisations, to build the relationships that make service systems work for children and families.

Our systems are not sufficiently designed to generate human capital, capability, connection and agency, nor cognisant of their adverse impacts:

- Our systems are largely designed to ‘fix’ people’s defects and deficits, rather than build capabilities and connections, and address the conditions, that ‘change the odds’.
- We are wasteful of potential human capability and capital.
- Our systems have not sufficiently addressed institutional racism and power and resource imbalances with First Nations peoples
- Our systems too often themselves cause significant, avoidable adverse childhood experiences and exacerbate toxic stress in families, exacerbating inter-generational cycles of disadvantage and adversity.
- We don’t give sufficient regard to the fundamentals of ‘human’ services – agency, regard, respect, recovery, inter-dependance, resilience and love.



Challenges with our child wellbeing systems

Our systems are not sufficiently driven by or accountable for their public impact, value and productivity:

- We cannot readily establish whether citizens and communities are getting sufficient public value or see how they are progressing.
- There is significant frustration within systems about their performance in enabling individual and collective change and in disrupting disadvantage and enhancing wellbeing and resilience.
- There are significant opportunities to enhance the productivity of our systems, especially in the reform of governmental processes.
- Few of our systems or strategies articulate and measure systems-level outcomes and results.

Our systems do not sufficiently equip or universally value the capability of our workforces:

- Some of our child-related systems rely on under-valued, under-trained and insecure workforces.
- There is too little effort currently in building common, contemporary knowledge, skills and attributes across child wellbeing workforces
- We could do better with embedding recognition of capabilities for collaboration and systems-work into professional and continuing education programs, qualifications, job descriptions and contracts.
- We could do more to ensure our workforces are reflective – through pathways, inclusion and diversity initiatives - of the communities they serve, and our organisations have the cultural capabilities and connections to provide respectful, responsive, safe and enabling services.



Challenges with our child wellbeing systems

Our systems undervalue citizens voices and under-invest in community roles, resources and expertise:

- Many agencies are putting greater effort and giving heed to the lived experience and expectations of citizens and communities, but this is not routine.
- We put insufficient effort into enabling communities to create healthy, safe, developmentally appropriate and prosperous places to raise children.
- We put insufficient effort into building public understanding of the latest child development science and evidence of what works and what matters.

Our systems are unevenly informed by data, analytics, evidence, experience and expertise:

- Our systems are not sufficiently or consistently driven by outcomes-oriented data and analytics.
- Our systems vary in capabilities for co-design and reform implementation.
- We have examples of world class expertise and good practice, but these are often not generalised or taken to scale or embedded.
- Our infrastructure for innovation and translation of 'science to service' and from 'knowing to doing' is uneven.

Challenges with our child wellbeing systems

Fundamentally, our systems are too often experienced by children, young people and families as disconnected or duplicative, wasteful and discordant. Too often our systems don't work together to actually 'serve' - in the sense of enabling people to exercise agency and to be able to change their life circumstances and trajectory. This experience – and this report's 'systems diagnosis' - are neither unique nor immutable.

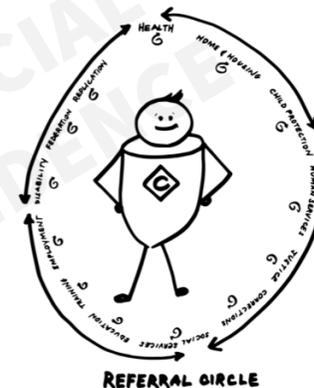
The problem

- Activity without progress
- Multiple and complex system of services and providers with inconsistent capacity and performance.
- Uncoordinated procurement across government.
- Variable political environment and public expectations.

HUMAN CENTRED DESIGN IN ACTION



WHERE THE SYSTEM MOVES AROUND THE HUMAN AT THE CENTRE, BUT THE HUMAN BARELY MAKES PROGRESS



IN AN ANALOGUE SERVICE SYSTEM

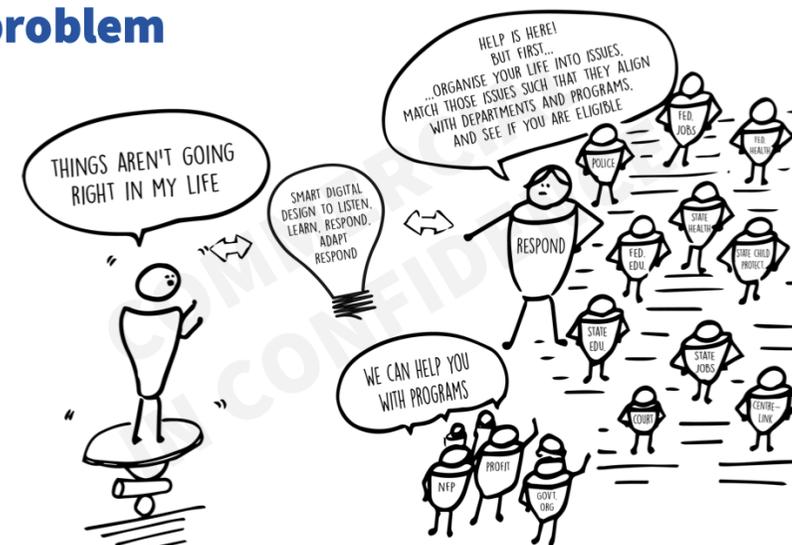
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The problem



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PART E. OPPORTUNITIES

change principles, reform directions and practical opportunities

Principles of Systems Change

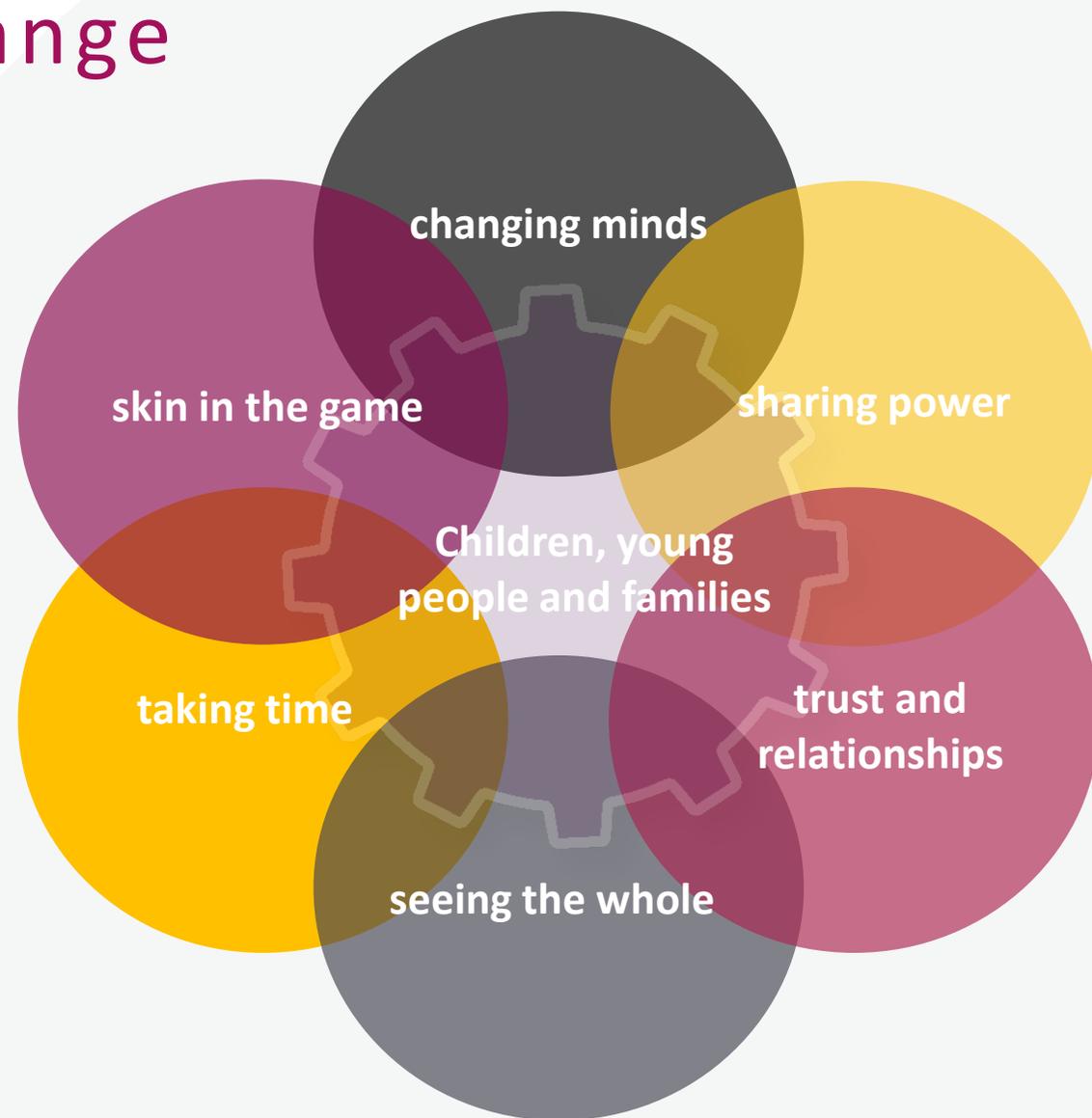
The increasing complexity of our world has resulted in new ways of thinking about and acting on how we can be more effective in addressing the challenges and embracing the opportunities that we are presented with.

Systems leadership has been described as “leadership across organisational and geopolitical boundaries, beyond individual professional disciplines, within a range of organisational and stakeholder cultures, often without direct managerial control. Its purpose being the intention to effect change for positive social benefit across multiple interacting and intersecting systems.” (Ghate, Lewis, & Welbourn, 2013)

A ‘systems approach’ addresses the relationships and intersections of systems and sectors, their context and conditions, their cultures and norms, their goals, roles and capabilities, and their collective performance and impact.

Impactful systems approaches are purposeful, creative and disruptive, collaborative and inclusive, engaging and enabling, share power, learn and are driven by lived experience, expertise and evidence. They put the value, voices, rights, relationships, opportunities and outcomes of people – in this instance of children, young people and families - at the core.

A review of the literature on systems thinking, change and leadership has indicated six key principles that have underpinned this project and which outline a way of working if we are to improve child and youth wellbeing:



Principles of Systems Change (cont.)

As important as what we do, is how we do it.

The principles of systems change provide some guide to effective practices of systems change:

- **changing minds:** culture change; challenging assumptions and norms; shifting mental models; reframing the narratives we tell ourselves and each other; listening for and hearing lived experience, expertise and evidence.
- **sharing power:** citizen and community leadership; collaborative and inclusive governance; diverse public participation; devolved decision making; participatory design; children and families at the core; hearing from all; learning.
- **trust and relationships:** building connections; trusting others; guiding not directing; loosening control; working together; diverse and inclusive partnerships.
- **seeing the whole and being focused:** broadening the view; breaking down silos; joining the pieces; seeing connections; addressing root causes; focusing on high value and high impact change.
- **taking time:** a long term outlook; beyond political cycles; more than a quick fix; try, test and learn; an ongoing commitment; champions to hold firm over time.
- **skin in the game:** individual & organisational roles; having courage; being purposeful; taking risk; reflection and learning; seeing our part in the system; personal journey; active participation.

“There’s no systems change without organisational change and no organisational change without individual change”
(Kania, Kramer, & Senge, 2018)

“The challenges that confront us in the 21st century will not be met by mere deference to power, reliance on a shaky status quo, or operation in old silos. Rather, they demand a model of leadership that is norm-based, principled, inclusive, accountable, multi-dimensional, transformational, collaborative, and self-applied.”
(UN Systems Leadership, 2017)

Systems reform directions

The synthesis identifies key directions for systems reform to drive impact and value from public and other investment and effort, to reduce disparities and adversities, and to boost productivity, prosperity and equity for individuals, families, communities and the nation. It looks to build on achievements and leverage current initiatives and emerging opportunities.

This section outlines: key reform directions, big ticket items, key system elements, practical reform initiatives, and few of the many examples that demonstrate well these directions, elements and principles.

These directions and initiatives provide a framework for reform that will help weave systems together. Importantly, doing them systematically – with a view to their inter-connections - will enhance both their likelihood of success and impact.

Prioritising the integrative initiatives will generate compounding benefits for children, young people and families, for communities, and for our nation.

The strategic directions are:

- **Make it national:** through a National Child and Youth Wellbeing strategy, aligned with ARACY's *The Nest* and state and local frameworks, articulated to the SDGs, and revamp roles and relationships across levels of government and sectors
- **Make it local:** boost place-based efforts that enable communities, services and systems leaders to engage, invest and change
- **Go early:** improve parent and care-giver support, transform early learning and care nationally, and enhance early detection and responses to early-life adversity and trauma
- **Go public:** through a concerted public narrative on child and adolescent development and family wellbeing to build engagement and capability

Systems reform directions (cont.)

- **Disrupt disadvantage:** through comprehensive efforts to address the social, economic and environmental conditions, especially housing and jobs, that drive adversity and disadvantage, and perpetuate inter-generational cycles
- **Prioritise Closing the Gap 2.0 and support First Nations leadership:** sustain momentum with CtG2.0, support First Nations leadership and innovation, tackle institutional racism, build broader community and systems engagement, and advance healing, reconciliation and reparation
- **Elevate care-giving:** Improve support for the wellbeing and capabilities of parents and other caregivers, especially young mothers, as well as fathers, grandparents and other kith and kin
- **Make it about capabilities and connections:** make human capability-development, connection-building and caring the core of systems, services and practice
- **Gear our workforces:** Build diverse, culturally-capable, scientifically-informed, collaborative, systems-oriented child wellbeing workforces with shared knowledge, tools and connections
- **Innovate and digitise:** Invest in cross-system and service innovation, integration, information sharing, digitisation and multi-purpose infrastructure
- **Knowing and doing:** Support transdisciplinary R&D, translation initiatives, implementation expertise, data matching, analytics and sense-making with families, communities and practitioners, and impact evaluation. Listen to lived experience and expertise. Create spaces for cross-sectoral engagement and development
- **Money for results:** reengineer budgeting, co-investment and commissioning for outcomes, rebalance for more upstream developmental, preventive and reward integrated efforts.

“Thinking in systems is a growing movement of thinkers, academics and practitioners who argue that governments and decision-makers need to move away from linear and siloed approaches to problem-solving, but instead see problems as part of a wider system. It is only by addressing the context and interconnectedness of our world that we can hope to deliver positive change.”

ANZSOG

<https://www.anzsog.edu.au/resource-library/thought-leadership/systems-thinking> (June 2020)

Key systems elements

There are many models for systems thinking, leadership, change and reform. Some of these are represented in the sources and diagrams shown above and in the Appendices.

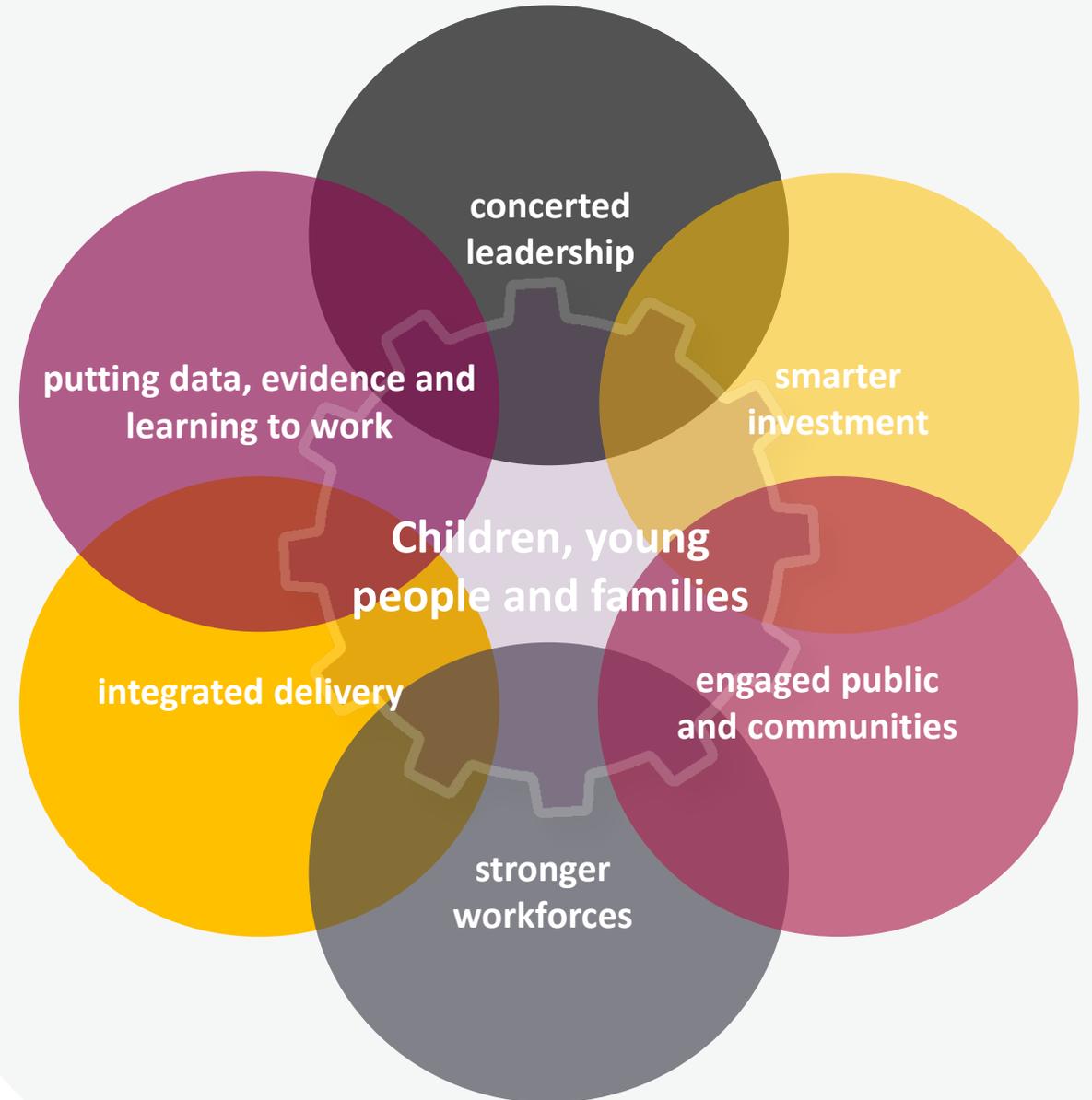
Our analysis indicates there are six critical elements or enablers for a systems approach to improve child and youth wellbeing.

As the National Academies put it:

“A multitude of factors, from the macro to the micro levels, contribute to the divergent trajectories that children experience. A child’s ecosystem is influenced by social, economic, cultural, and environmental factors that impact healthy development and wellbeing. These influences start before birth and have an impact through an individual’s life and across generations. ...

When outcomes are driven by forces that cut across multiple systems, even doing everything perfectly within one system is not enough. Multisector causality requires a multisector response”.

As indicated above, the value, voices, rights, relationships, opportunities and outcomes of people – children, young people and families – are at the core.



1 Concerted leadership

It takes good systems to raise a child. Improved child wellbeing requires concerted systems leadership and stewardship. It requires priority and focus, political leadership and cross-sectoral collaboration. It requires a shared public purpose mission of enabling child wellbeing and reducing adversity and disparity. It requires initiative to mitigate the risks and harms of COVID-19, and to take the opportunities to “build back better”.

Priority opportunities include:

- Elevating the well-being of children and young people as a nation-building priority – not a fragmented responsibility across jurisdictions - and articulating a **cross-sectoral National Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy** that sets out shared priorities and outcomes for safe, healthy, productive lives for all children and young people in Australia. This should be National Cabinet-led: bringing together targets set through Closing the Gap and other national strategies; establishing universal access to early learning and care; establishing universal health, education and support guarantees for all children and young people; guiding investment in priority initiatives; clarifying roles and responsibilities; engaging the public, community, tertiary, philanthropic and corporate sectors; facilitating local efforts; and advancing systems reform.
- Requiring every national plan or strategy to **explicitly address the interface between, and leverage opportunities across, related national frameworks.**
- Systematically reviewing the findings of research and reports on **the impacts of COVID-19 on children, young people and families**, such as ARACY & UNICEF’s report *Kids at the Crossroads: Evidence and Policy to Mitigate the Effects of COVID-19*.
- Each State and Territory Government, if they have not already done so, developing **Child and Youth Wellbeing outcomes frameworks and strategies**, and establishing mechanisms, such as a Child Development Council that support effective engagement and collaborative governance of the national and state strategies.
- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and community-controlled organisations being supported as a leadership and investment priority by all sectors.** Governments, mainstream NGOs and philanthropies in all jurisdictions continue efforts to build cultural competency at organisational and systems levels. Expanded investment in capacity development in First Nations communities and organisations and community-led responses to the child-wellbeing priorities in the national Closing the Gap 2nd Agreement and State and Territory strategies such as *Our Way*, *Wungurilwil Gaggapdui* and others.
- **Non-Government Organisation leaders work in concert** to better link service delivery, share information and innovation, develop workforces and translate knowledge to practice.

1 Leadership examples

Closing the Gap in Partnership

The new Closing the Gap National Agreement has been developed in genuine partnership between Australia Governments and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations (the Coalition of Peaks).

It is underpinned by the belief that when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a genuine say in the design and delivery of policies, programs and services that affect them, better life outcomes are achieved. It also recognises that structural change in the way governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is needed to close the gap.

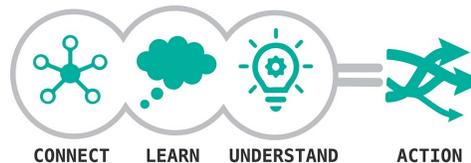
In addition to outcomes and targets that outline ‘what’ is to be done, the new Agreement also articulates four Priority Reforms that articulate the ‘how’ of the partnership. These have been directly informed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These reforms are: Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision Making; Building the Community Controlled Sector; Transforming Government Organisations; and Shared Access to Data and Information at a Regional Level.

See: <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/>
<https://coalitionofpeaks.org.au/>

The Front Project’s Apiary Initiative

The Apiary brings together people who are committed to creating thriving futures for children in Australia – with a focus on systems change in early learning - building leadership, collaboration and capability.

The Apiary Fellowship is a program that supports its Fellows to build a holistic view of the early childhood education and care (ECEC) system and bring about positive change for children. Apiary Fellows attend a series of forums called Convenings, where they are encouraged to connect with each other, learn from shared and different experiences and understand how insights can be applied within their own contexts as well as the broader ECEC system. Fellows develop a shared agenda for action that always has children at the centre.



Through all of this, Fellows become catalytic leaders who continuously collaborate and learn to create change for children in Australia.

See: <https://www.thefrontproject.org.au/initiatives/building-collective-leadership-the-apiary>

NZ Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy

In 2019, after extensive public engagement, the NZ Prime Minister released the NZ Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework and Strategy, linking outcomes, aspirations, actions, investment and measures of success. The Strategy sets out the actions the Government intends to take to improve the wellbeing of all New Zealand children – now and in the future.

The Strategy - led by the Prime Minister and coordinated by DPMC - is a collective call to action and provides an overarching framework for the work of government and others to align with.

The Strategy includes a vision to aspire to; nine principals to guide the way; six wellbeing outcomes to set direction; and indicators for measuring progress.

It describes its essence to be to “plant the seed of love in our children and they will blossom, grow and journey towards the greatest pathway of life”

It draws on the knowledge, insights and interest of children and families, local government, iwi, non-governmental organisations, business and community sectors and learn from successful community-led initiatives.

See: <https://childyouthwellbeing.govt.nz>

2 Smarter investment

Success in raising child wellbeing requires the investment of sufficient financial and other resources, and their effective and efficient utilisation: well-balanced across the universal, secondary and tertiary systems; supporting innovation; informed by evidence; and driving value, impact and productivity from existing and new investments and assets, across all sectors.

Priority opportunities include:

- Governments reengineer their investment policies and processes to foster **cross-sector integrated responses to child and youth wellbeing**, and to reduce duplication, gaps and waste.
- Governments establish **Regional Commissioning entities for Child, Youth and Family Wellbeing investment with pooled funds** (including community and NGO leadership) to engage communities and provide strategic, evidence-based planning, commissioning and evaluation.
- Governments move to collaborative contracting with **longer term contracts (7 years) that foster long-term intervention and evaluation**, and reflect the direct and indirect costs of service provision.
- Governments direct a **proper share of investment to First Nations community controlled organisations** more proportionate to levels of over-representation and need in particular systems.
- Australian philanthropies coalesce to jointly develop an **Australian Child and Youth Wellbeing Investment Strategy** to maximise impact by investing at scale and in trials to stimulate innovation, integration, transformation, entrepreneurship, evaluation, translation, leadership and community development.
- The Australian Government with States and Territories, NGOs, PHNs and philanthropies establish a **place-based Child and Family Futures initiative**, akin to City Deals, by extending and consolidating the current *Stronger Places Stronger People, Communities for Children, Empowering Families* and like place-based initiatives, and supported by investment in capability building and evaluation.
- Governments replicate and **build on and share learnings from investment reform initiatives** like the NSW Government's *Their Futures Matter*. This is a landmark reform to deliver improved outcomes for vulnerable children, young people and their families by creating a service system that delivers coordinated, wrap-around and evidence-based supports to transform their social outcomes. Central to this investment approach that directs and prioritises whole-of-government funding to deliver prioritised solutions that achieve measurable and meaningful outcomes.

2 Investment examples

Institute for Urban Indigenous Health

The Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH) is a regional not-for-profit Community Controlled Health Service (CCHS) that leads the planning, development and delivery of health and family wellbeing services and employment pathways to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of South East Qld.

Utilising the IUIH System of Care, IUIH empowers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to take responsibility for their health and wellbeing through the delivery of a comprehensive range of services in partnership with its four member CCHSs: ATSICHS Brisbane, Kalwun, Kambu and Yulu-Burri-Ba.

As well as providing a coordination, integration and leadership role across the region, IUIH directly delivers health, wellbeing services and social support services to the Moreton Bay region.

IUIH has successfully accessed and deployed a raft of Commonwealth, State and other funding sources. IUIH is not only helping to close the gap in physical and social health, but it is also contributing to improved education and employment outcomes through school readiness initiatives and 'training for real jobs' employment and career pathways.

See <https://www.iuih.org.au/about-iuih/>

Western Sydney PHN Kids Early Years Network

WentWest / Western Sydney PHN is facilitating an innovative, evidence-based, regional service alignment, information sharing, brokerage and co-commissioning initiative, in conjunction with the NSW Government. The Kids Early Years Network (KEYS) has been driven by analysis of the life-long, generational impacts and costs of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), and service and system gaps and opportunities. KEYS plans to assist up to 10,000 families over six years. See: <https://wentwest.com.au>

Waka Kotahi, NZ Ministry of Transport

Waka Kotahi has introduced an Innovating Streets for People pilot fund (around \$7m) to help local councils create more people-friendly spaces in towns and cities. Projects can be anything from piloting a new walking or cycling facility to pop-up community-led street events, including regular play-street programmes. This has enabled the [Christchurch Council and Healthy Families Ōtautahi to initiate a series of Play Street events](#) around the city, temporarily closing a street to traffic and inviting the local community to get together so children of all ages can scoot, bike and play safely. This is a great example of central and local government teaming up to improve the wellbeing of children and families.

See <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/roads-and-rail/innovating-streets/about/pilot-fund>

Alberta Government's Well-Being and Resiliency Framework and investment reform

In 2019, the Government of Alberta adopted a whole of government *Well-Being and Resiliency Framework* and applied this to its investment and commissioning.

The Framework supports Government of Alberta staff, Indigenous communities and contracted service providers by:

- articulating prevention and early intervention (PEI) as a means to achieving well-being and resiliency for infants, children, youth and families;
- defining the well-being and resiliency model and key elements of the prevention and early intervention continuum of services
- identifying the desired outcomes – including systems level - for prevention and early intervention activities;
- supporting decision-making on funding and service delivery; and
- promoting an understanding of how trauma impacts development. Significantly, the Minister for Children's Services requires all contracted early years, family support and child protection services to embed the Framework and all staff to be Brain Story certified.

See: www.open.alberta.ca/publications/9781460141939 & www.albertafamilywellness.org/

3 Engaged public

Groundbreaking work over recent years in North America, Europe and Australia demonstrates that a critical element - for effective parenting, safe and supportive communities and enabling systems - is a compelling, shared public and systems-wide narrative about child and adolescent development. Also vital is effective public and community engagement, with the best examples characterised by community-led initiatives, projects that are genuinely sharing power and knowledge, and those that deeply engage with the lived experience and voices of children young people and families.

Priority opportunities include:

- Building on work by ARACY, Parenting Research Centre, MCRI/CCCH, Telethon Institute, Emerging Minds and other agencies, devising a **national approach to Child Development information** and education as a partnership of Governments, key research institutes and other knowledge providers. This would: map and coalesce information assets, channels and capabilities; fill gaps in current efforts to mobilise expertise, knowledge creation and translation of science to service; show what matters and what works; address misconceptions and not well-evidenced beliefs and norms; address barriers to help-seeking; help make the case for systems change and how best to do so; and contribute to activating institutions, citizens and communities.
- Government agencies, statutory bodies, science bodies (such as the CSIRO), research institutes and networks, NGOs, philanthropies, public broadcasters (ABC/SBS/NITV) and others coordinating Child Development information and education initiatives such as, for example, the emerging **ARACY-led Brain Builders Alliance (BBA)**. BBA is a national initiative to mobilise the rapidly emerging knowledge from neuroscience and other biological and psychological sciences to aid effective parenting and care-giving.
- All sectors actively informing the public of the **nation-building priority of child and youth wellbeing**, and the services and supports available so that all children are born healthy, start school ready to learn, and leave school ready for life. For example, philanthropic investors and other community, tertiary and corporate partners could work with ARACY and Every Child to advance the *It Takes Six* campaign.
- All sectors continuing to enhance their **engagement with children, young people, caregivers and community members in the design, development and implementation** of child and youth well-being initiatives. Consideration should be given to regular national parenting surveys.
- Enhancing public reporting on progress to Parliaments and communities using **evidence-based wellbeing index/measures**. This should seek to align national, state and local reporting, and involve ABS, AIHW, AIF, PC, AHRC, ARACY, UNICEF and State and Territory Statisticians.

3 Engagement examples

Telethon/Colab, Parenting Research Centre and NAPCAN with the Frameworks Institute

Over the past decade, the US Harvard Center on the Developing Child, the Canadian Palix Foundation and the Alliance for Strong Families and Communities have collaborated with the Frameworks Institute to inform the framing of 'The Brain Story' and its application in the Alberta Family Wellness Initiative, a range of *Change in Mind* initiatives across North America, and in the UK by Oxford Brain Story, NSPCC and others.

In Australia, a number of projects have been undertaken in collaboration with Frameworks - including the Parenting Research Centre on parenting, Telethon Kids/Colab on the 'core story' of child development, and NAPCAN on child abuse prevention - to help inform narratives and communication suitable for Australia.

This is informing work at national, state and local levels, such as www.raisingchildren.net.au, www.talkingfamilies.qld.gov.au, www.logaltogether.org.au and more recently, the Qld Government's Early Childhood Development Story. See: www.telethonkids.org.au/projects/HPER/core-story/; www.parentingrc.org.au/programs/reframing-parenting/; www.frameworksinstitute.org; & <https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/early-years/early-childhood-development-story>

Hands Up Mallee (HUM)

Hands Up Mallee is a Social Impact Initiative that brings together local leaders and community to address social issues and improve health and wellbeing for children, young people and their families.

Since 2015 HUM has had over 2,000 conversations with community including children and young people. Through these conversation, HUM learnt about the region's passions, aspirations, concerns and ideas to determine a Common Agenda for change. This included specific Youth Conversations and a "Voice of Children" project that sets out to ask children aged 3-8 what they did and didn't like, and what they wanted for their future.

Through collective sensemaking by the Leadership Table, the community conversations were analysed to develop an emerging Common Agenda articulated through the Community's aspiration of:

"A connected community, where families matter, and children thrive."

The Plan has been developed to help articulate key result areas and priority outcomes to measure changes in the community to meet this aspiration.

See: <https://www.handsupmallee.com/>

NZ Inspiring Communities: Child Rich Communities

The overarching goal of the Child Rich Communities (CRC) project is to grow a movement of people who think and work in community-led ways to improve child, family and whanau well-being. The CRC supports communities to decide what solutions will work best for them, sharing power, decision-making and resources to enable locally led responses and for people to make positive change for themselves, their children, their family and the wider community.

See: <https://inspiringcommunities.org.nz/child-rich-communities/>

Refugee Education Support Program (RESP)

RESP is a Victorian Government funded collaboration with the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), Foundation House, Catholic Education Commission Victoria (CECV) and Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) in 150 school communities. Through RESP, clusters of government and non-government schools receive intensive support to identify and implement strategies that improve achievement, engagement and wellbeing outcomes for students from refugee backgrounds.

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/suppourt/diversity/eal/Pages/ealsupportrefugee.aspx>

4 Stronger workforces

Our workforces do extraordinary work, but they also express concern about skills, conditions, the tools they operate with, and the siloes they work in. Success in improving outcomes will require further effort to build the capability of all child wellbeing workforces, especially in core, common and contemporary knowledge, skills and attributes for all those working with, or who have systems responsibilities for, children, young people and families.

Priority opportunities include:

- Governments, NGOs, ANZSOG, philanthropies and tertiary institutions support **cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral tertiary and professional development programs** on Child and Youth Development and Systems Leadership
- Governments, philanthropies, tertiary institutions, NFPs and professional bodies continue to **support and replicate or extend initiatives** such as Evidence for Learning (E4L), the National Workforce Council for Child Mental Health (Emerging Minds), and The Healing Foundation's work to build workforce capability to heal a nation.
- Governments, NGOs, tertiary institutions and professional bodies ensure workforce strategies and initiatives for each system supporting Australia's children and families (such as early learning, education, health, family services, disability and mental health) **utilize contemporary child development sciences - especially neuroscience** and the lifelong interaction of brain and physical health, and support capabilities for working in and stewarding joined up service approaches.
- Governments, NGOs, tertiary institutions and professional bodies partner in articulating a **National Child and Youth Wellbeing Capabilities Framework** of the core life skills desired for children, adolescents and parents/families, and the core capabilities expected of all care and development workforces and organisations, including collaborative skills, across all our services and systems.
- Governments and child wellbeing organisations, in each jurisdiction, develop and deploy a **'Getting it Right for Every Child and Young Person' service and support navigation type model** (akin to Scotland's approach), providing a sustained, trusted relationship with a nominated government or NGO worker from any of the child-related (early learning, Health, Family Support, Education, Justice etc) systems to available to assist all families, especially those experiencing complex needs and circumstances.
- All Child development workforce strategies pay **priority attention to workforce issues** for services with First Nations children and their families, with other cultural and linguistically diverse communities, and for rural and regional areas.

4 Workforce examples

Emerging Minds: National Workforce Council on Child Mental Health

For over 20 years, Emerging Minds has been dedicated to advancing the mental health and emotional wellbeing of Australia infants, children, adolescents and their families.

Emerging Minds now leads the National Workforce Centre for Child Mental Health to assist professionals and organisations who work with children and/or parents/families to have the skills to identify, assess and support children at risk of mental health conditions. The Centre incorporates three components:

- Online workforce gateway
- National network of regionally based Child Mental Health Workforce Consultants
- Communication and knowledge translation strategy

Emerging Minds has developed a Workforce Development Framework to further the identification, assessment and support of children (aged 0 – 12 years) who may be at risk of or experiencing mental health difficulties. The Framework underpins a commitment to support early action, early in life, to improve the mental prosperity of Australia.

See: www.emergingminds.com.au/

ARACY's *The Nest* and *The Common Approach*

The Common Approach[®] is a prevention-focused and flexible way of working to help everyone have quality conversations with young people and their families about all aspects of their wellbeing.

These align with the six wellbeing areas of ARACY's *The Nest* wellbeing outcomes framework: Loved and Safe; Health; Participating; Positive Sense of Culture and Identity; Material Basics, and Learning.

The Common Approach encourages those working with children, young people, and families to work in partnership with them, focus on strengths, place the child at the centre of the conversation, and consider all aspects of a family's circumstances.

The Common Approach is supported by a suite of resources that facilitates conversations with families by providing prompts and guidance for practitioners. It has been adopted and adapted in a range of service contexts.

It is not a standardised risk assessment tool, but rather a simple, versatile way of working that enables child-led and child-focused discussion across all areas of wellbeing.

See: www.aracy.org.au/the-nest-in-action/the-common-approach

National Interdisciplinary Education Framework for Professionals working in the Early Years

The Framework is designed to be used to inform education curriculum for preparing professionals working with children in the early years.

The framework attends to the diverse demands of multiple professions, qualification levels and workforce agendas. It includes:

- Statement of shared outcomes
- Interdisciplinary map highlighting training and professional requirements in selected children's services professions
- Statement of universal essential elements - knowledge, skills and attributes - for working with children from birth to five years age
- Self evaluation tool to guide reflection.

The resources can be integrated individually or as a collective into existing learning and teaching curriculum to provide a platform for shared understandings for workers with children from birth to five years.

See: <https://cfapps.flinders.edu.au/early-years/> & www.researchoutput.csu.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/20270884/1000008312_published_report.pdf

5 Integrated delivery

The Productivity Commission and others have long made the case for more joined up service delivery, but this has proved elusive. We need to design-in a core focus on enabling human development, connection and agency into policy and practice; strengthen services across the universal, secondary and tertiary systems, especially to the children and families experiencing most vulnerability; leverage digital transformation and inclusion to enable citizens and practitioners to navigate systems; and systematically revamp outdated models and inequitable barriers. There are many examples of joined-up approaches - multi-agency and multi-disciplinary teams, child and family hubs, digital pathways initiatives etc, but there much more yet to do to embed and systematise these approaches.

Priority opportunities include:

- Governments support **cross-sectoral bodies or networks in each jurisdiction tasked with advancing child wellbeing by facilitating systemic reform**, especially for service and infrastructure integration and innovation, and investment reform. These should include community representatives, philanthropies, researchers, practitioners and government and non-government systems leaders, including senior representatives of the Commonwealth Government.
- Governments and other stakeholders engage with initiatives like the Centre for Policy Development's project on early learning, with its Council on Early Childhood Development, the National Early Years Catalysing Group, and Every Child alliance's **policy and program proposals**.
- Governments revamp budget and social infrastructure programs and processes, in liaison with local communities, to encourage the re-purposing of existing health, education and other social services infrastructure or the **planning and provision of multi-purpose facilities**.
- Governments, NGOs and other digital service entities develop **child wellbeing digital reform initiatives** to: assess the current channels that enable families and practitioners to access services and share information; support digital innovation and inclusion; and support the information systems requirements of NGOs.
- Governments and other stakeholders advance, as a priority, recommended reforms to address significant issues at the **interface of family law, child protection, family violence and related systems**.
- Governments, in liaison with NGOs, philanthropies and citizen/ consumer, invest in the development of **integrated child wellbeing digital pathways and a citizen/consumer controlled child wellbeing digital wallet/backpack** for families to facilitate services access and coordination, track appointments and key actions, and enable self and service impact evaluation.

5 Integration examples

Qld's *Navigate Your Health*

Navigate Your Health is a place-based, co-designed model to improve the health and wellbeing of children in care by managing the processes and pathways for initial health screening, subsequent comprehensive health and developmental assessments, and the provision of ongoing healthcare needs. When children and young people come into care, they can have complex physical, dental, social-emotional, developmental and mental health needs.

Navigate Your Health is a partnership between Children's Health Queensland, DCYJMA, Brisbane ATSICHS, Primary Health Networks (PHNs), with designated Nurse Navigators working with children and young people and foster carers, Child Safety Officers, the child's parents and healthcare professionals, to assess and coordinate the child's access to the right health services in a timely way.

In addition, DCYJMA and Brisbane South PHN are leading the development of a Qld-wide Digital Health Pathway initiative *Strengthening health assessment response for children and young people in care*, with locally co-designed pathways being trialled.

See: <https://www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/latest-news-navigate-your-health-helps-500-children-in-care-get-on-track-to-a-healthier-future/>

Scotland's *Getting It Right For Every Child*

Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) supports families by making sure children and young people can receive the right help, at the right time, from the right people. The aim is to help them to grow up feeling loved, safe and respected so they can realise their full potential.

Most children and young people get all the help and support they need from their parent(s), wider family and community but sometimes, perhaps unexpectedly, they may need a bit of extra help. GIRFEC is a way for families to work in partnership with people who can support them, such as teachers, doctors and nurses.

It has been used and tested across Scotland since 2006. GIRFEC is central to all government policies which support children, young people and their families and is delivered through services and people who work with families.

GIRFEC has developed and deployed a shared wellbeing indicators framework, a national practice model, personalised Child Plan tools, information sharing protocols, service standards and practitioner resources.

GIRFEC has been legislated, backed by significant community engagement and professional development, and supported through data intelligence and reviews.

See: <https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/>

Victoria's *Doveton College*

Doveton College's commitment is that every child can learn, thrive and achieve. Children learn best when they have strong, nurturing families and excellent teachers. The College describes itself as more than a school. It is the first Victorian government school designed to meet the needs of children from birth to Yr 9 and their families.

The College's Early Learning Centre and Prep-Year 9 school is open from 7am to 6pm. It has health, family and community services attached to it in one convenient location, in purpose-built facilities.

The innovative and integrated model has been supported through a partnership between [The Colman Foundation](#) and the Victorian Government. Doveton College seeks to support, foster and develop opportunities for all members of the Doveton Community including children, young people, and adults. The focus is on providing high quality teaching and learning programs for young people aged 0 – 15 with additional learning opportunities for parents and the wider community.

Doveton provides a wide range of wrap-around educational and allied health support including Baby College, Maternal and Child Health services, Medical and Adult Learning opportunities.

See: <http://www.dovetoncollege.vic.edu.au>

6 Putting evidence, data and learning to work

Improving child and youth wellbeing requires a more systematic approach to putting data, insights, learnings and expertise to work. There is considerable scope to: improve data matching and data sharing; keep fostering innovation and continuous improvement; improve reform implementation; and balance the focus on accountability arrangements with ‘human learning systems’ approaches.

Priority opportunities include:

- Bodies such as the ABS, NHMRC, ARC, AIHW, AIFS, ARACY, MCRI and Telethon Kids and philanthropies explore the feasibility of joint or **coordinated clearinghouse / portal of evidence-based information to inform key child wellbeing reform and investment** initiatives, like the network of What Works institutes in the UK such as the Early Intervention Foundation.
- Governments, liaising with NGOs, commission the ABS, AIHW, AIFS and PC, in conjunction with ARACY, UNICEF, Family Matters, Every Child and key research institutes, to jointly develop an **Australian Child Data Asset and a National Child Wellbeing Index and Data and Analytics Roadmap**, replicated in each jurisdiction.
- Governments support the development of the **Australian National Child Health and Development Atlas** (based on the WA Child Health & Development Atlas) and support **Local Child Wellbeing Reports** that enable customized, holistic, dynamic and comparative localised profiles of the wellbeing of their children.
- Governments, NGOs and other partners implement **nationally consistent child, adolescent and parent wellbeing measurement** across all education settings Governments support a cross-sectoral Child, Family and Community vulnerability index.
- Governments, NGOs and other partners strengthen **investment in, and use of the insights from data-matching and analytics exercises** (such as NSW’s Their Futures Matter *Future Forecasting* exercise; the Victorian *Gen V* initiative; the Qld *Mater Family & Child Cohort Study*; the WentWest Western Sydney PHN *KEYS network*; the work of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Children and Families over the Life Course etc), and support local level data matching exercises, to inform key child wellbeing reform and investment initiatives.

6

Evidence examples

100 Families WA

100 Families WA is a collective action research project with a vision to address the issue of entrenched disadvantage or hardship, as experienced by families living in WA.

This wicked problem is agreed to be complex and beyond the scope of any one agency to impact upon significantly. Ten partner organisations eight not-for-profit organisations from the community service sector and the University of Western Australia - have joined forces to achieve a common goal of reducing entrenched disadvantage in WA.

There is also an ongoing commitment to engage and work alongside individuals who hold lived experiences of hardship to help guide project practice.

By conducting this research, 100 Families WA aims to gain a deep understanding of entrenched disadvantage in WA through investigation of lived experience.

100 Families WA was inspired by Auckland Mission's research project, *The Family 100 Project*.

See: www.100familieswa.org.au

See also: www.aucklandcitymission.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Demonstrating-the-Complexities-of-Being-Poor-An-Empathy-Tool.pdf

Dartington Service Design Lab (UK)

Dartington Service Design Lab (DSDL) is a UK-based research and design entity dedicated to improving outcomes for children and young people. DSDL works in close partnership with those commissioning, designing or delivering services for children.

DSDL's work is grounded in data and evidence, as well as a deep understanding of public systems and the diverse needs and community contexts they serve.

DSDL works at the intersection of public system reform and service design and improvement. This is informed by insights that system change efforts that lose sight of the services children and families use will have limited impact, and conversely, that services designed without consideration of wider system conditions are unlikely to succeed.

DSDL's approach is that systems change and service design should go hand-in-hand, and they work as an evidence and implementation partner with numerous local projects. DSDL have produced comprehensive evidence syntheses and practice guides for place-based early learning systems reform. They also work to build systems leadership capability.

See: <https://www.dartington.org.uk>

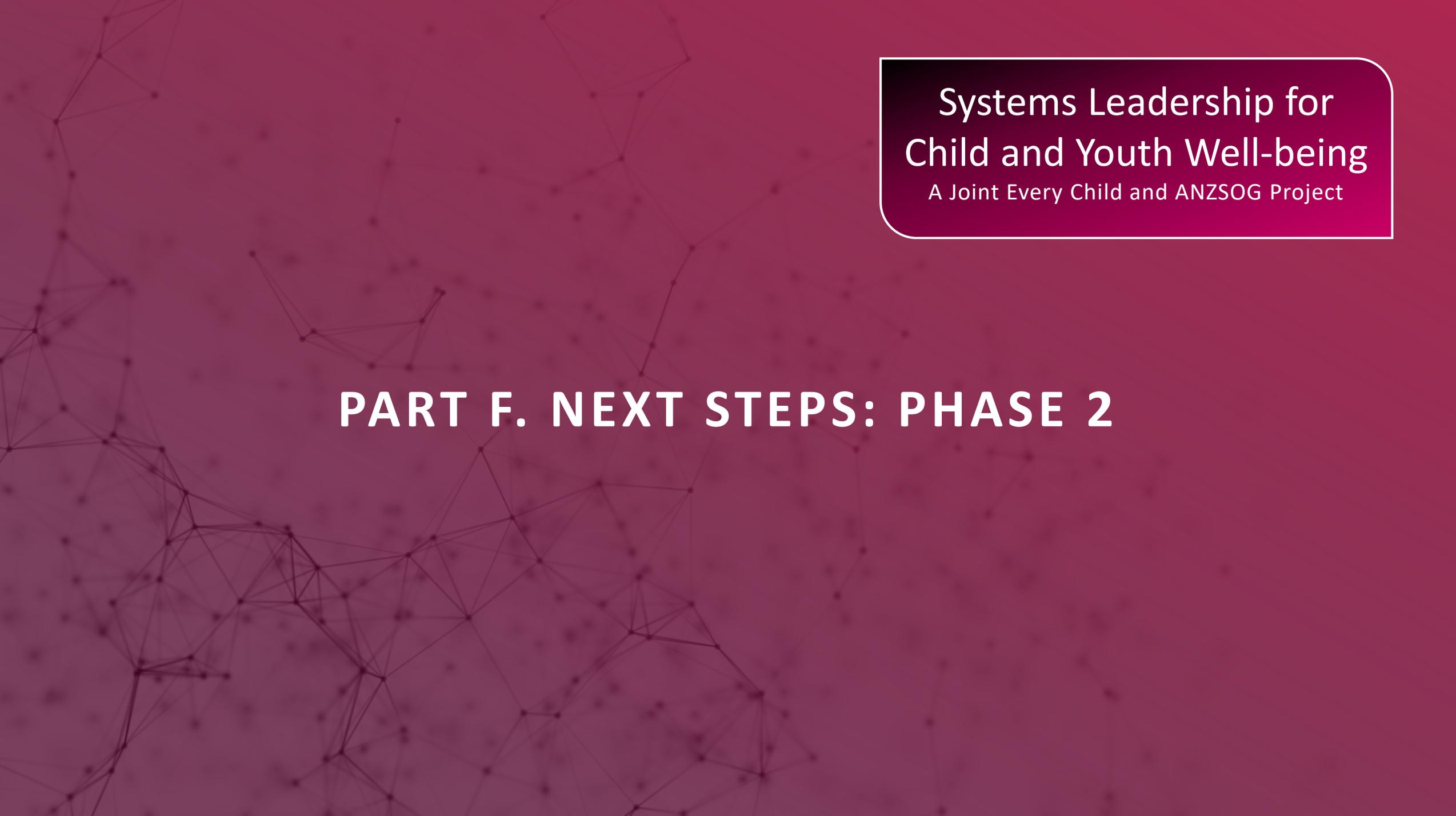
The Life Course Centre

The ARC Centre of Excellence for Children and Families over the Life Course is a national research centre established in 2014, administered by the University of Queensland.

The Life Course Centre (LCC) is a collaboration with the University of Sydney, the University of Melbourne and the University of Western Australia as well as international partners and experts. LCC is supported by key agencies that have responsibility for Australia's social and economic welfare programs, and by non-government organisations

The Centre vision is to leverage evidence-based research to develop new knowledge, technology and practices to benefit Australian children and families living in disadvantage, including: identifying the drivers of deep and persistent disadvantage; developing and trialling new solutions in policy and practice; training the next generation of research leaders; and building capacity across government, researchers and non-government organisations. The LCC received a second 7 year investment of \$32.1M from the Australian Government in late 2019, with academic and industry partners also committing an \$33 million in cash and in-kind

See: <https://www.lifecoursecentre.org.au>



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PART F. NEXT STEPS: PHASE 2

What you said through the webinar:

Feedback and next steps

"We need an integrated, multilateral national 25 year (at least) strategy that our country in all its facets will sign up to and fund appropriately with a long term commitment"

[NFP]

"I wonder whether the [draft] Report sufficiently highlights the dysfunction created by our multiple layers of government, departmental silos, funding arrangements, which collectively create incentives that are contrary to good outcomes for the most vulnerable children"

[NFP]

"Data needs to be strengths based and find the positives as well as identify weaknesses / problems. Need to use a framework to guide the discussion and the work - Child Wellbeing Framework. Decide who we are trying to influence and/or support – some data helps families and individuals, other data will help decision makers and Governments"

[Stat Auth]

"we need to look at a more sophisticated approach to how the Federation operates beyond governments, with particular emphasis on inter-relationships between government and civil society and the role of subsidiarity to empower local communities and families"

[tertiary]

"I'd love to see more on the agency of systems leaders - not just what needs to be done, but by whom and how"

[philanthropy]

"I'd like to see a more explicit acknowledgement of the need for investment in child wellbeing (and child safety) to be driven by principles of a public health approach (i.e., population based, driven primarily by universal service delivery platforms etc.) but with capacity to ramped up intensity of support for children / families where needed"

[tertiary]

"There is huge potential for building stronger connective tissue between the participants – across different jurisdictions, from government, not for profit, business, philanthropy and with different lenses on the topic of child wellbeing"

[NFP]

"Very supportive of the findings and proposed responses. Creating a vehicle for change to drive the reforms remains the big challenge ... moving from the knowing to the doing"

[NFP]

"there are quite a few other campaigns also in this space at national and state level - we need to walk the talk and make sure we coordinate our efforts love to see more on the agency of systems leaders - not just what needs to be done, but by whom and how"

[NFP]

Phase 2

'We are not separate from the system; we are the system.'

Systems leaders who have participated so far in the *Systems Leadership for Child and Youth Wellbeing* initiative have indicated strong support for the project to continue and keenness to be further engaged. There is also much that individual leaders can do through their own organisations and existing networks and initiatives.

Every Child and ANZSOG will continue to collaborate to advance Phase 2 as a partnership involving representatives from key sectors, consistent with the key reform directions and the system principles and elements outlined in this report. This will be most impactful as a co-production and distributed initiative, leveraging both existing and emerging opportunities canvassed in this report or by others.

The Australian Children's Commissioner, Government agencies, community organisations, peak bodies and networks, universities, corporates and philanthropies will be encouraged to participate in Phase 2 and to work together on integrative, practical initiatives. The ambitions and scope of the initiative will depend on the permission, opportunities, commitments and resources available.

The initiative will endeavour to:

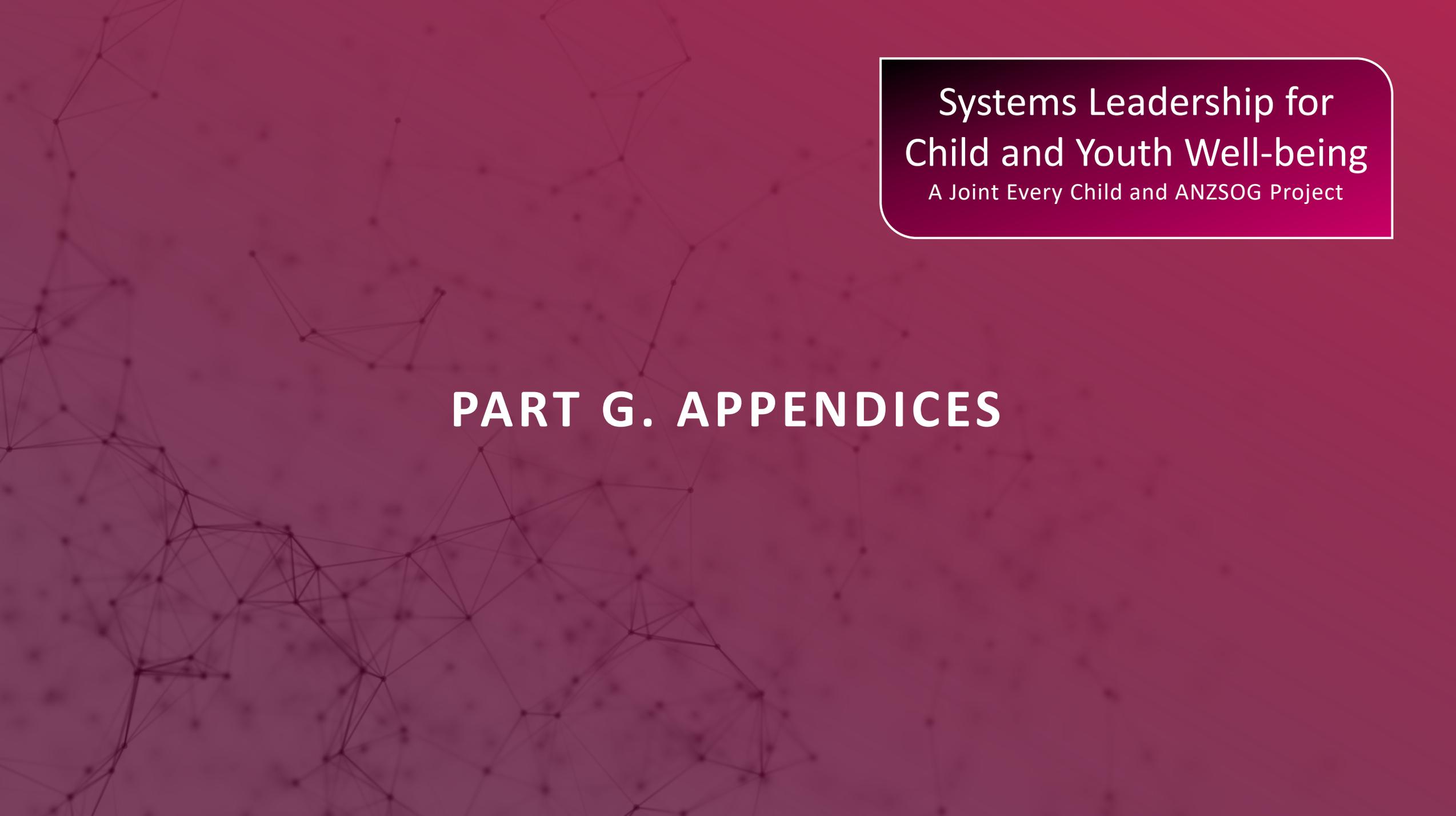
- seek further endorsement of First Ministers and involvement of relevant portfolios
- facilitate dialogue with interested leadership groups and networks
- facilitate co-design and action on specific opportunities with interested organisations
- support initiatives by First Nations leaders and networks
- support aligned cross-sectoral systems reform and leadership initiatives, and
- periodically re-engage system leaders on progress and learnings.

"As many of you have already commented upon today, we are the system. So the change really needs to come from us. And the influence we have with the colleagues, the organizations, the politicians and the systems that we work with. And that's really the movement that we're trying to actually create here."

Simon Schrapel,
Co-Chair, Every Child

"There are some important findings from the work that we've done today, systemically. The importance of looking at issues not from a programmatic perspective, but from a wellbeing perspective. Looking at issues about what we want to achieve outside the silos. Looking at issues about how we operate, and how we need to get greater sophistication in our understanding of how the Federation operates. It is a major constraint, but it's a major opportunity. If we start to think beyond the Federation, just being national and local government, it needs to link with civil society. And we need to be really working together on that basis ..."

Ken Smith,
Dean and CEO, ANZSOG



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PART G. APPENDICES

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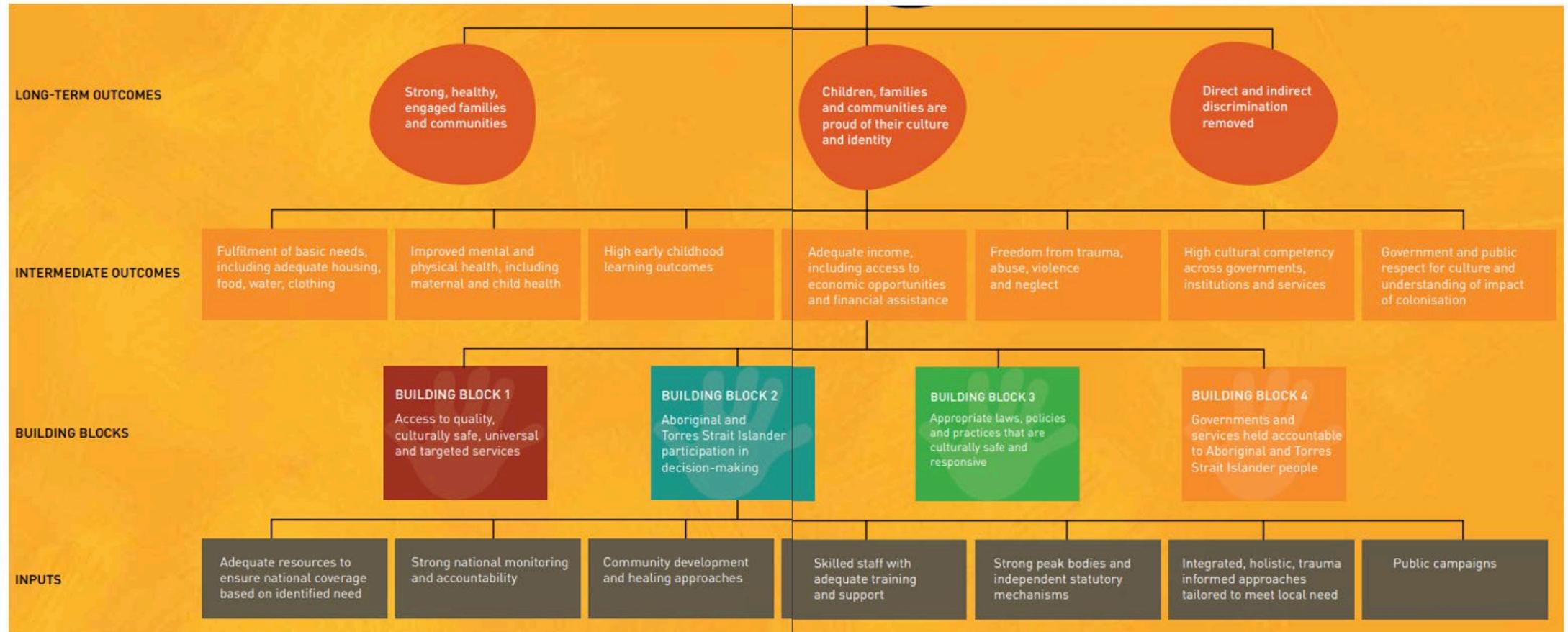
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The Family Matters Roadmap

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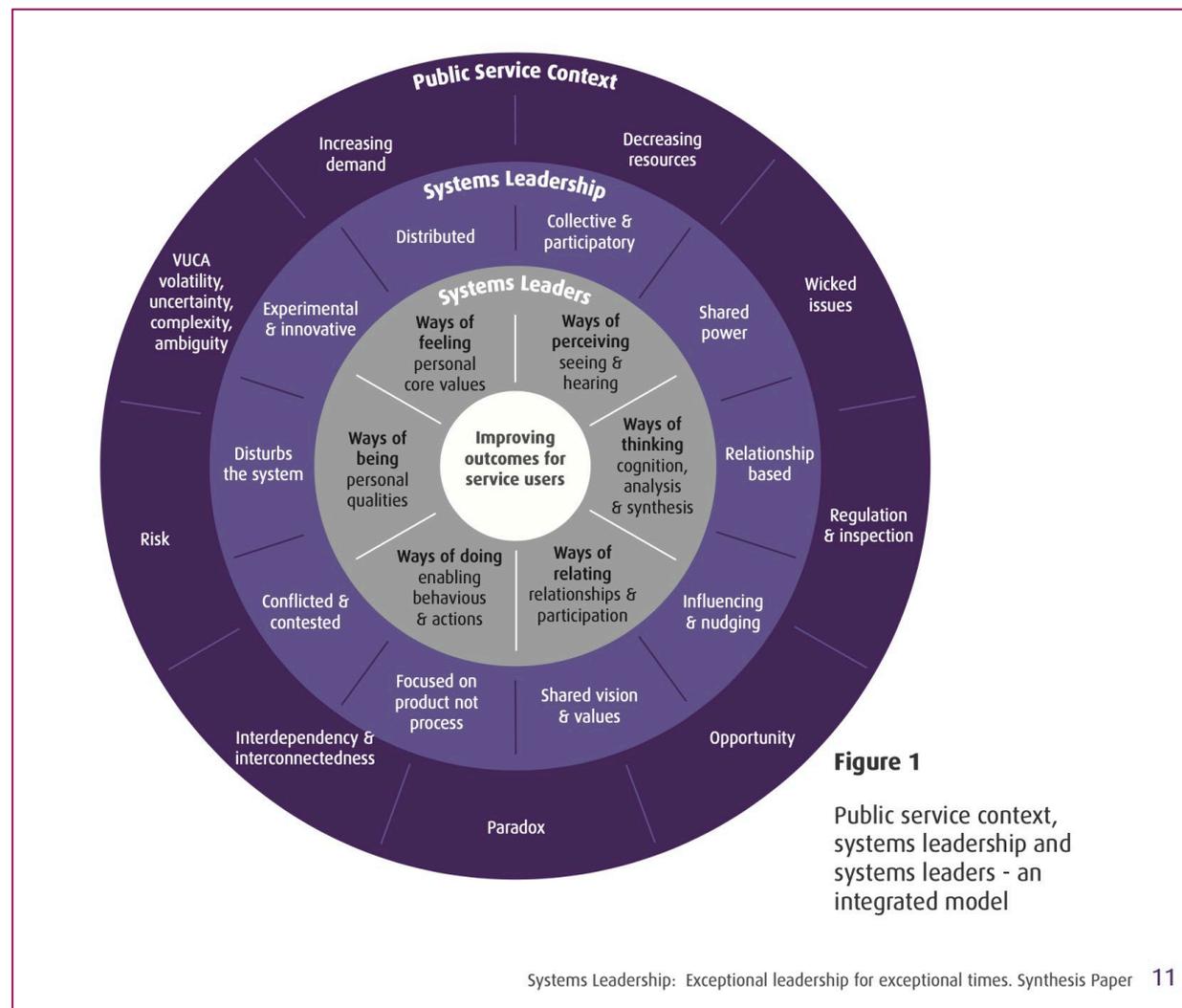


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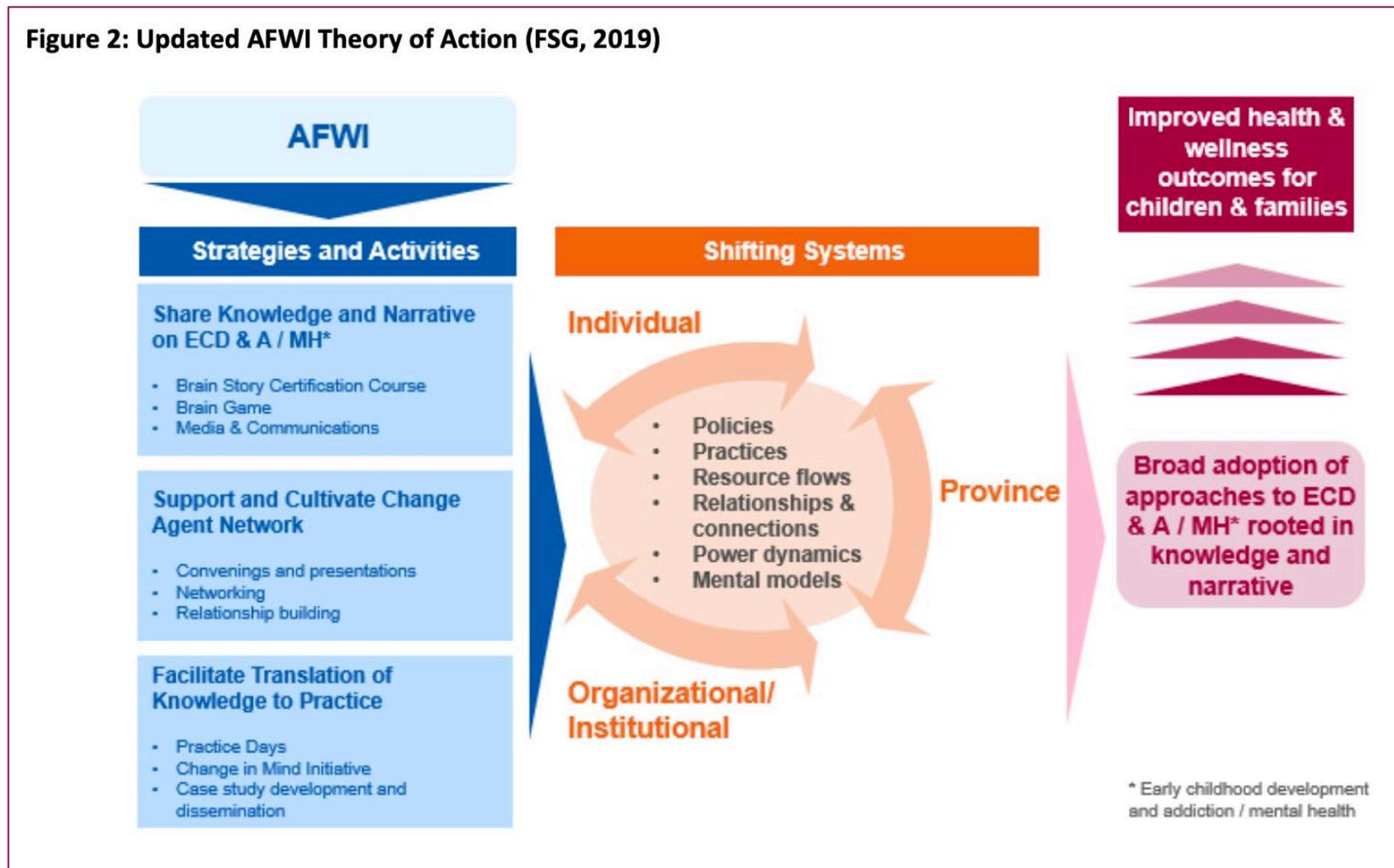
Appendix 2: Key frameworks (cont.)

Alberta Family Wellness Initiative Theory of Action

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Figure 2: Updated AFWI Theory of Action (FSG, 2019)

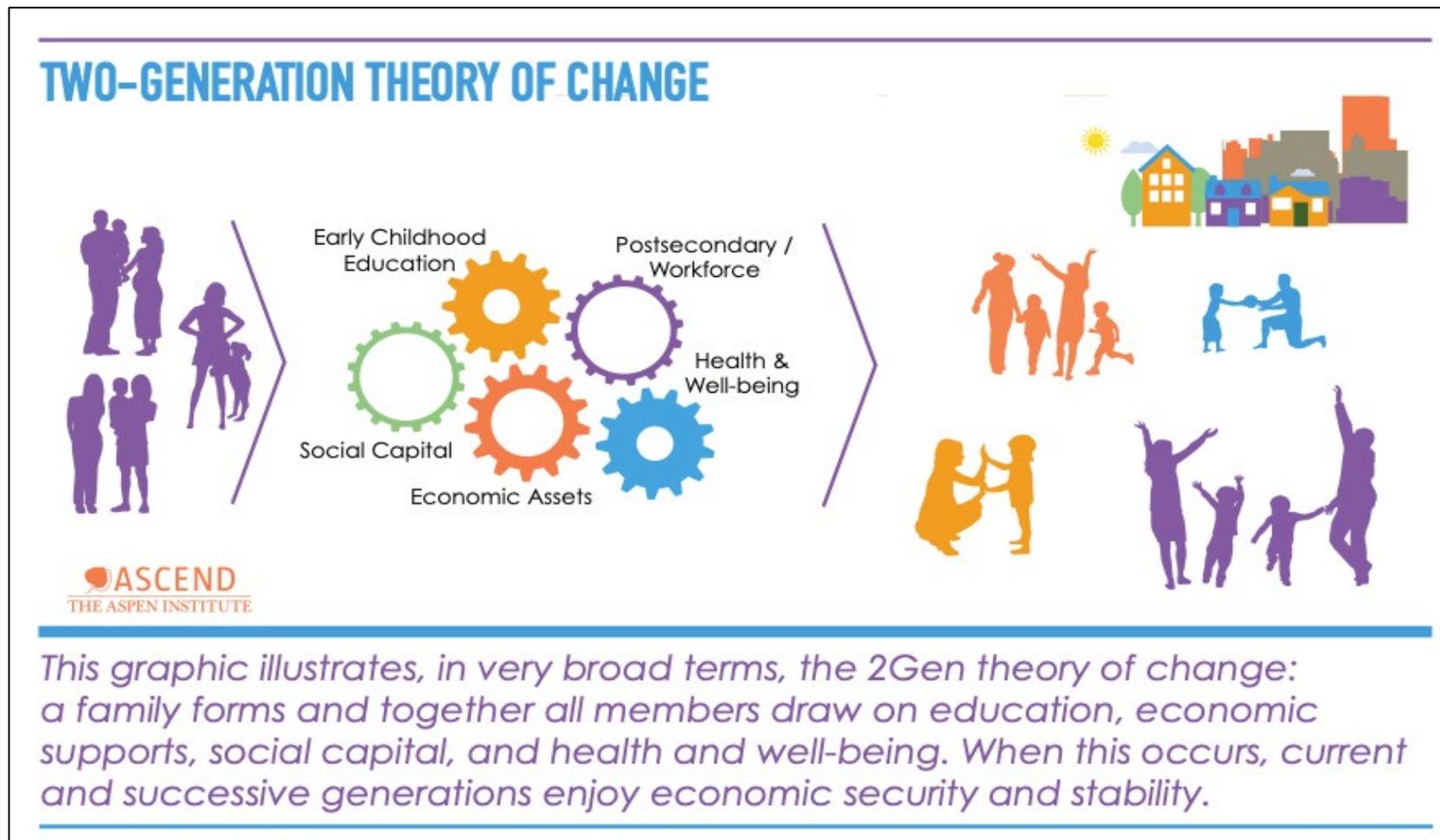


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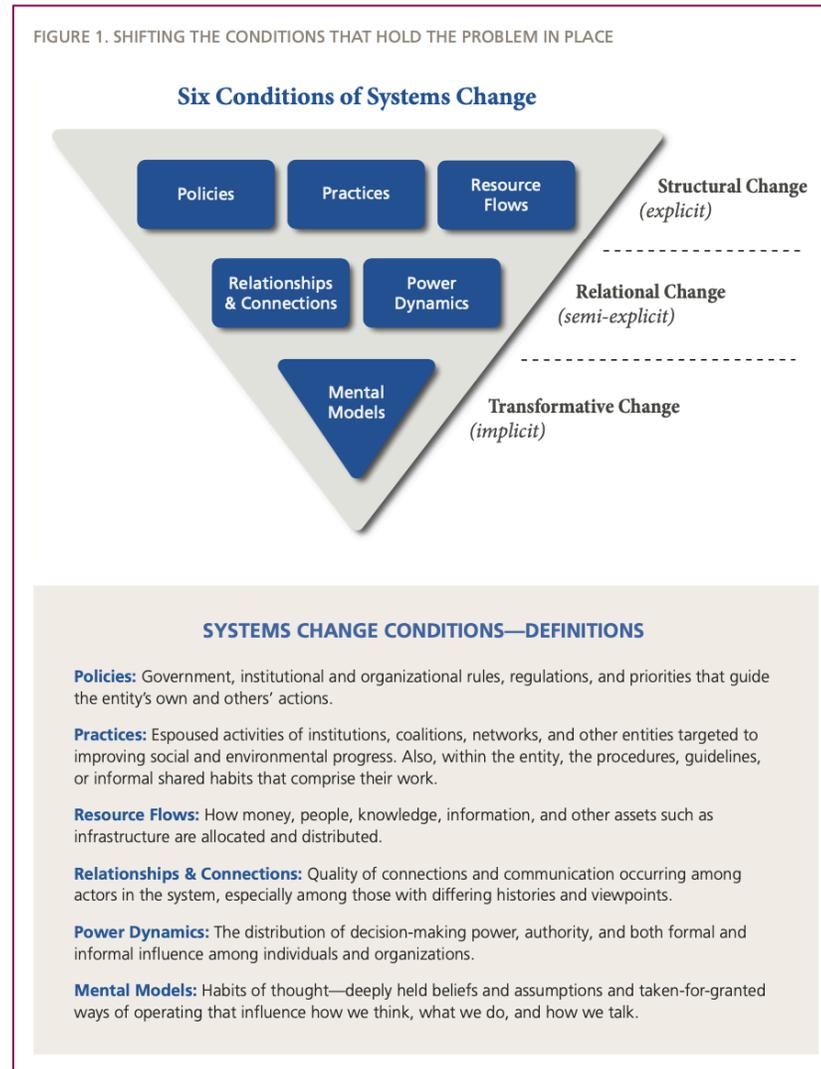
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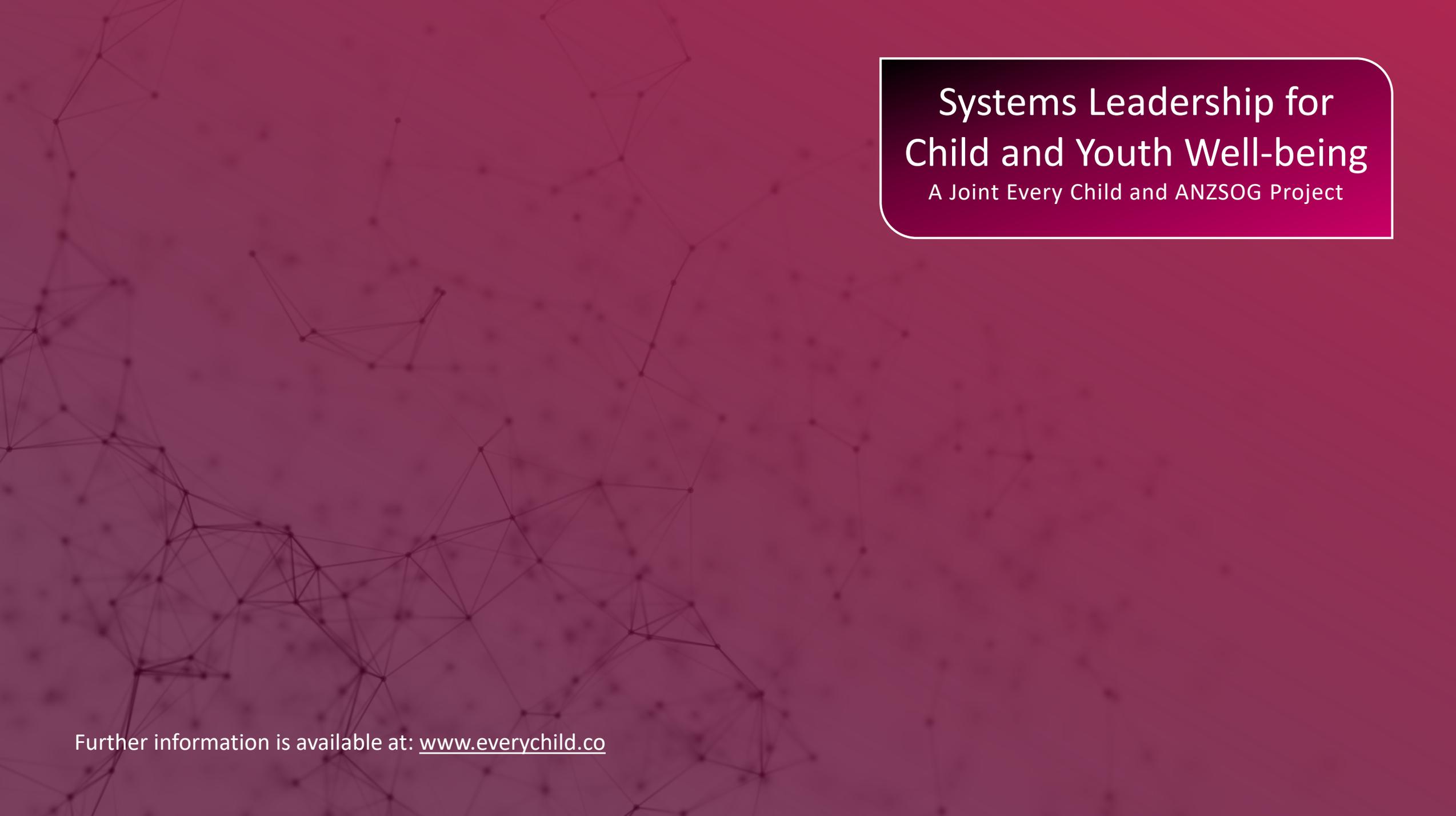


Appendix 2: Key frameworks (cont.)

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