



## **CAARS Taskforce Final Meeting 17 June 2010:**

### **Statement of meeting outcomes**

The *Common Approach to Assessment, Referral and Support* (CAARS) is one of the first projects to be funded under the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020* endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments in April 2009. The CAARS project is a significant practical step toward the objective set out in the National Framework of cooperative government and non-government responsibility for protecting children.

A high-level Taskforce, co-convened by the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and ARACY, has guided development of the project over the past 12 months. The CAARS Taskforce comprises community leaders across health, education and community service sectors (membership attached). The collaborative work of the Taskforce reflects the overarching premise of the Australian Government's *National Compact with the Third Sector* – that working in partnership is the key to community wellbeing.

The Taskforce met at Parliament House in Canberra on 17 June 2010 to agree on the recommended 'Common Approach' and steps for taking it from conceptualisation to implementation. The meeting was opened by Senator Ursula Stephens, on behalf of the Hon Jenny Macklin, and Professor Fiona Stanley from ARACY. It commenced with a presentation by the Allen Consulting Group on the final CAARS Report, the resulting Common Approach and the companion guidance manual.

The Taskforce agreed that a consistent approach to responding *early* to the needs of children and families is the most effective way of preventing an escalation of child abuse and neglect. The Taskforce endorsed the Common Approach as a practical and user-friendly means for enabling universal service providers and practitioners such as doctors, teachers, child care workers and others to identify and respond early to children, young people and families and, where appropriate, to facilitate a pathway to appropriate social supports and services.

#### *Meeting Outcome 1:*

#### **Taskforce members affirmed the components of the recommended Common Approach:**

- *A vision, aims and practice principles*, expressing the concepts underlying the Common Approach and giving universal service providers the context within which to identify and respond to need.
- *A needs identification mechanism*, focusing on child wellbeing, and emphasising the child's and family's strengths and protective factors.
- *Professional guidance reference points and conversation prompts*, setting out a process for enabling practitioners to explore underlying issues and needs with the child and family in an environment of trust and relationship building; including

practical suggestions for taking action to link the child and family with pathways of support and, as appropriate, collaborating with other universal and targeted service providers to do so.

- *A self-assessment questionnaire*, designed to be used by (older) children, either individually or in conversation with the practitioner.

#### *Meeting Outcome 2:*

**The Taskforce affirmed the collaborative process** that has informed development of the Common Approach over the past 12 months, acknowledging:

- the 220 people from universal, targeted and tertiary services who participated in the initial consultation workshops and provided feedback in the form of written submissions and by way of a telephone conference
- the Technical Working Group that provided expert advice during the development phase
- those practitioners and young people who were 'sounded out' on usability of the Common Approach during the refinement stage.

The level of collaborative engagement facilitated by ARACY with all relevant partners has been critical for achieving a final 'product' that can be realistically used as an effective prevention tool.

#### *Meeting Outcome 3:*

**The Taskforce agreed that the following recommendations be made** to the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs when the final report is submitted:

That the Minister:

- notes the significant progress in the development of a Common Approach to Assessment, Referral and Support (the Common Approach)
- notes the CAARS Taskforce's strong endorsement of further development and implementation of the Common Approach
- considers mechanisms to support further development of the Common Approach, noting its potential relevance and application through the National Early Childhood Strategy and the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children
- considers seeking endorsement from COAG, through the Community and Disability Services Ministers Conference (CDSMC), for supporting the evaluation and implementation of the Common Approach by:
  - expanding the Common Approach prototype endorsed by the CAARS Taskforce to include training material, an online service database, a website and documentation

- 'live testing' the CAARS prototype materials and Common Approach in at least three sites across Australia, firstly through formative evaluation and then through efficacy and effectiveness trials, before rolling this out across Australia in a staged approach
- notes the advice from the CAARS Taskforce that additional funding is required to finalise prototype development and undertake live testing, and to progress organisational cultural change among universal and secondary services to support integration of the Common Approach into existing work practices.
- notes that, subject to evaluation of the efficacy and effectiveness of the Common Approach, further funding will be required for national implementation to commence in 2013.

*Meeting Outcome 4:*

**The Taskforce affirmed that the final report be presented** to the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs with a recommendation that it be made publicly available as soon as possible.

*Meeting Outcome 5:*

**Taskforce members agreed to communicate** the meeting outcomes and ongoing development of the Common Approach to their respective peak bodies, professional associations and member agencies.

*Next Steps:* The final report of the CAARS project and the recommendations listed above will be submitted to the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs by 30 June 2010.

Further developments, including opportunities for involvement in any ongoing activity by interested individuals and organisations, will be noted on the ARACY web site.

*Conclusion:*

The Common Approach aims to progress *shared* responsibility across universal services for the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and their families. It has received support from those sectors most likely to use it – the health and teaching professions, counselling services, children and family services sectors, Centrelink and state and territory government departments. The success of the Common Approach will depend on establishment of its effectiveness and efficacy and adequate resourcing to enable a collaborative approach to its national implementation involving all relevant professionals, sectors and agencies.

The Co-Convenors abstained from discussions to ensure independence and impartiality of meeting outcomes.

For further information go to [www.aracy.org.au](http://www.aracy.org.au) or email [enquiries@aracy.org.au](mailto:enquiries@aracy.org.au)

## **Attachment: CAARS Taskforce Membership 2009-2010**

### **Co-convenors:**

The Hon. Jenny Macklin, MP	Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
Professor Fiona Stanley, AC	Chair, ARACY

### **Taskforce Members – Government:**

Ms Linda Apelt	Director-General, Department of Communities, Queensland <u>Alternates:</u> Ms Anna Moynihan and Ms Anne Kilner
Mr Mark Byrne	Director, Disability, Youth, Child, and Family Services, Tasmania
Mr Martin Hehir	Chief Executive, Department of Disability, Housing & Community Services, ACT <u>Alternate:</u> Mr Frank Duggan
Ms Fiona Lander	Executive Director, Department for Child Protection, WA <u>Alternates:</u> Mr David Cain and Dr Susan Diamond
Mr Allan Joy	Department of Health and Families, Northern Territory Government
Ms Linda Mallett	Acting Divisional Director, Policy & Planning, NSW Department of Community Services <u>Alternates:</u> Ms Susan Sarlos and Ms Susan Nicholson
Mr Paul McDonald and then Mr Michael Naughton	Executive Director, Children Youth & Families Division, Department of Human Services, Victoria <u>Alternate</u> to February 2010: Mr Michael Naughton
Ms Lynette Pugh	Director, Community Connect Branch, Department for Families and Communities, South Australia <u>Alternate:</u> Ms Susan O’Leary

### **Taskforce Members – Non-Government:**

Mr Brian Babington	CEO, Families Australia <u>Alternate:</u> Ms Stella Conroy
Ms Pam Cahir	CEO, Early Childhood Australia
Ms Gillian Calvert	Children’s Advocate and former Commissioner, NSW Commission for Children and Young People
Ms Debra Cerasa	CEO, Royal College of Nursing Australia <u>Alternate:</u> Ms Elissa O’Keefe
Ms Belinda Epstein Frisch	Institute for Family Advocacy and Leadership Development
Ms Maree Faulkner and then Rosanna Martinello	CEO, National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect

Ms Lesley Fraser	President, Australian Guidance and Counselling Association <u>Alternate</u> : Mr Tony Harris
A/Professor Kelsey Hegarty	Fellow, The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
Professor Ian Hickie	Executive Director, Brain & Mind Research Institute <u>Alternate</u> : Professor Stewart Einfeld
Mr Steve Larkins	Chairperson, Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care
Professor Lyn Littlefield	Executive Director, The Australian Psychological Society
Ms Libby Lloyd	Chairperson, National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children
Dr Bob Lonne	National President, Australian Association of Social Workers
Mr Paul Mason	Commissioner, Commission for Children and Young People Tasmania
Dr Chris McAuliffe	Australian General Practice Network
Mr Andrew McCallum	CEO, Association of Child Welfare Agencies
Dr Jenny Proimos	FRACP President, Paediatrics and Child Health Division, Royal Australasian College of Physicians <u>Alternate</u> : Dr Sue Packer
Dr Luke Rumbold	CEO, Upper Murray Family Care, Family Relationship Services Australia
Professor Dorothy Scott	Chairperson and Director, Australian Centre for Child Protection, University of South Australia Alternates: Dr Fiona Arney and Mr Michael White
Mr Simon Smith	Executive Officer, Homelessness Australia
Dr David Thomas	Australian Medical Association
Mr David Templeman	CEO, Alcohol and Other Drugs Council of Australia
Ms Leonie Trimper	President, Australian Primary Principals Association <u>Alternate</u> : Mr Michael Nuttall
Dr Joe Tucci	CEO, Australian Childhood Foundation
Mr Alan Woodward	General Manager, Lifeline Australia <u>Alternate</u> : Ms Rebecca Alfonso
<b><i>Ex officio</i></b>	
Ms Cate McKenzie	Group Manager, Women & Children's Policy, FaHCSIA <u>Alternate</u> : Ms Allyson Essex
Dr Lance Emerson	CEO, ARACY