
Please find below a brief summary of the *Towards a National Action Plan* report, prepared for discussion at *The Nest* Summit – Phase 1, to be held on the 23 November 2012, Melbourne.

**What is *The Nest***?

*The Nest* is an independent project to improve the wellbeing and life opportunities of all young Australians, initiated and facilitated by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) and its 2200 members, in collaboration with Bupa Health Foundation.

*The Nest* breaks new ground by building a National Plan based on collaborative action and cross-sector endorsement. The National Plan focuses on the areas where there is clear evidence we could be doing better for our children and young people.

**Why are we developing a National Action Plan for child and youth wellbeing?**

As a nation, we need to arrive at an agreed vision and agenda for achieving the best future for all our children and young people. Australia is only a middle-ranked country when it comes to the wellbeing of our children and young people, who often face formidable systemic barriers to achieving their full potential. It is hoped this report will aid discussion, at *The Nest* Summit – Phase 1, about what are the most important objectives and game changers for the advancement and wellbeing of all young Australians.

**How did we get here?**

We brought together 80 major organisations in Canberra on 2 December 2010 and agreed on a set of Key Result Areas (KRAs) that represent the key life domains of wellbeing and health.

An axiom that has centred our thinking is ‘nothing about us without us’. The outcomes from the first meeting were explored with a national sample of children, young people and families who told us, among other important things, that they did not want government and others doing things ‘to them’. They accepted and wanted responsibility for their lives and families and in their community and the life of the nation. Families wanted systems and policies that made it easier to achieve their potential and be good parents.

The five agreed KRAs, or quality of life conditions, which *The Nest* aims to see realised for all young Australians are:

- Children and young people are loved and safe
- Children and young people are healthy
• Children and young people are learning
• Children and young people are participating
• Children and young people have material basics.

Following agreement on these priority areas, we began work on:

2. Consolidating the evidence base on the policies that work and don’t work, as well as the data on how we are performing in each of the KRAs.
3. Giving the Plan a clear identity – now known as The Nest.
4. A national Summit to communicate progress and build agreement across sectors on the next stages.

Our aspirations and the game changers

From our work with children, young people and families, and in reviewing the evidence, a number of aspirations and ideas have emerged which we believe can fundamentally improve the wellbeing of all young Australians.

These game-changing ideas reflect the aspirations of and for young Australians and we believe their achievement is attainable and vital. International comparators have been set to help measure Australia’s progress.

Turning the curve will require innovative and creative action – new approaches, steadfast commitment, sustained effort, revised assumptions and proper investment to give all our children and young people an equal chance for the future.

The game changers are:

1. Reducing income disparity in Australia – the aim of this game changer is that Australia ranks within the top five OECD countries for income equality by 2020. Recent studies reveal income disparity in Australia is increasing.

2. Improving our performance on the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) – the aim here is to reduce the percentage of children identified as developmentally vulnerable on the AEDI to 20 per cent by 2020. Evidence shows the early years are of vital importance and are now well-recognised as having a profound impact, not only on immediate development, but also on educational outcomes and health and wellbeing well into adulthood.

3. Improving the educational performance of young Australians – the aim here is that Australia ranks within the top five OECD countries for educational performance by 2050. In addition to the important recommendations of the Gonski report, there are two additional priorities that will help achieve improved educational performance for all young Australians: an increased focus on the ‘middle years’ and on parental engagement in education, recognising that a child’s home learning environment and the quality of parenting and care
that a child receives is the most important factor in their intellectual and social development.

4. **Improving the social and emotional wellbeing of young Australians** – working to ensure Australian children and young people are ranked within the top five OECD countries on the UNICEF measures for social and emotional wellbeing by 2025. Evidence shows all young people need to develop both cognitive skills and social and emotional capabilities to help them achieve the outcomes that they and others value, both in their lives right now, and for their future.

5. **Recasting service system design to support the wellbeing of young Australians** – the game changer here is to ensure that by 2020, all levels of governments have recast their service system based on the following four principles:
   - placing children and young people at the centre of program and service design;
   - adopting proportionate universalism, which combines the benefits of universal and targeted approaches in a systematic way with the goal of promoting equality of opportunity overall;
   - adopting a system planning approach built on life stages and informed by best evidence, where the planning and delivery of services occurs in an integrated and holistic manner rather than in response to established program boundaries; and
   - a greater focus on outcome measurement and impact, including a common outcomes measurement framework.

For more information, visit: thenestproject.org.au

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