

Context

Child Wise is a social enterprise of Save the Children that exists to ensure the safety of children and young people in organisations where they spend time. We provide child safety training, consultancy, coaching and accreditation services to build the capacity of executives, staff and volunteers to meet state and national child safety standards and principles. Child Wise also operates a Helpline that provides information, referrals and guidance to people engaging with the National Redress Scheme. Child Wise has developed a number of resources to help young people learn about the National Redress Scheme.

Child Wise's recommendations for the October 2020 Budget are focused on supporting implementation of the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework and in particular the requirement for organisations funded through Commonwealth entities to demonstrate compliance with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

The National Principles outline ten elements that are fundamental to making an organisation safe for children and young people. The National Principles provide a consistent approach to creating child safe cultures within organisations.

We make specific recommendations for funding allocations across the Department of Social Services, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the National Indigenous Australians Agency.

Protecting Australia's Children

The National Office for Child Safety, within the **Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet** leads the development and implementation of national priorities recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (the Royal Commission), including the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework, and the National Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse.

The **Department of Social Services** maintains overall responsibility for the implementation of the National Redress Scheme along with managing the Australian Government's Families and Children Portfolio. The Department has recently extended funding agreements under the **Family and Children Activity Program** until 30 June 2021. The extension allows the department to build on a national consultation process that commenced in 2018 as well as to consider the ongoing National Framework for Protecting Australian Children, which concludes this year. The extension has also introduced a requirement that providers monitor compliance with the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework. The Family and Children Activity Program represents an annual investment of over \$225 million from the Department of social Services.

The **Stronger Places, Stronger People Program** is a place based collective impact initiative that will be implemented across 10 communities across Australia with the long-term goal of interrupting intergenerational disadvantage with a \$35 million investment planned over five years.

The **National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA)** funds projects aimed at helping Indigenous Australians through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy. In addition, the new Closing the Gap in Partnership prioritises four key reform areas. These reforms are central to the National Agreement and will change the way governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. Reform # 2 commits to sustained capacity building and investment for a strong community controlled sector. The

NIAA Program represents an annual investment of approximately \$130 million (2019-20 Budget, \$5.2 billion over four years to 2022-23).

Communities and Organisations at Full Stretch

2020 has created extraordinary challenges for the non-government and not-for profit sectors across Australia. The extreme drought, bushfires and floods along with the COVID-19 pandemic have all significantly impacted fundraising efforts and threatened workforce shortage. Further funding cuts are anticipated as the economy slows.

At the same time, organisations that deliver services for children and their families are facing unprecedented demand as well as the need to innovate service delivery to meet a changing service delivery landscape.

In addition, the introduction of new regulations around Child Safety, require organisations to deliver the same or increased services to their clients, with the same or decreased level of funding, along with increased compliance requirements.

This combination is unlikely to result in better outcomes for children.

Ensure Adequate Funding for Organisations to become and stay *Child Safe*

Child Wise endorses in the strongest terms the Government's work to both regulate the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations through funding agreements as well as to support the capacity of organisations to meet these Principles by reforming the way that government engages with organisations and communities.

The Royal Commission was clear in its recommendations that all organisations that have any contact with children must be compliant with 10 National Child Safe Standards as outlined in **Volume 6, Making Institutions Child Safe**. The Standards are a benchmark against which organisations can assess their child safe capacity and set performance targets for a best practice approach to child safety. The Royal Commission was equally clear that Child Safe Standards will be effective if Governments strike the right balance between ensuring effective implementation with the burden of implementation.

The Australian Government has both a clear mandate and a significant stake in improving institutional child safety. It can create the conditions for effective implementation of the National Principles through its funding mechanisms. We encourage the Government to factor the real costs for organisations to undertake this critical work

However, if the Commonwealth Government is to realise its ambition for child safe organisations in this country (and if organisations are to realistically meet the legislative and regulatory mandate), Child Wise asks the Australian Government to adequately fund organisations to meet the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations through DSS's Family and Children Portfolio, through the NIAA's IAS and through the National Office for Child Safety.

Child Wise suggests an appropriation be calculated as a percentage of overhead above an organisation's funded budget, so that providers can incorporate institutional strengthening or capacity building to enable full integration of the 10 National principles for Child Safe Organisations.