

Progress on Regional Commitment and Action Plan against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

A Children and Young People's Participation

The Australian Government is committed to providing opportunities for young people to have their say in shaping the policies that affect them. Initiatives supporting this include the:

- *National Youth Roundtable* – which each year brings together 50 young Australians aged 15 to 24 to meet with the Government to discuss issues affecting people. Roundtable members undertake a series of consultations to develop a picture of the views and attitudes of young people, which are reported back to Government.
- *National Indigenous Youth Leadership Group* – which brings together 15 young Indigenous Australians aged 18 to 24 years, to discuss with the Government their experiences and perspectives about issues important to them, advise the Government on the most effective ways to empower Indigenous young people in their communities and promote positive images of Indigenous young people.
- As part the development of Australia's National Plan of Action for 'A World Fit for Children' the Federal Government commissioned the New South Wales Commission for Children and Youth to consult with children and young people on their views on what constitutes a 'world fit for children'.

B Coordination and Cooperation

The Australian Government is committed to working collaboratively with state and territory governments to address this issue. There are a number of mechanisms through which related issues are being pursued. These mechanisms include the Council of Australian Governments (COAG); the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General (SCAG) and the Community and Disability Services Ministers Conference (CDSMC).

Areas where collaboration is occurring include:

- Development of a *National Plan of Action* in response to *A World Fit for Children*, the outcomes document from the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children, held in May 2002. Australia's National Plan will outline how Australia's existing and proposed child-related policies, legislation, strategies and specific programs work together to form Australia's response to *A World Fit for Children*. As noted under section A, children and young people are involved in the consultation process; and
- Development of a *National Agenda for Early Childhood*. The National Agenda for Early Childhood, aims to ensure that children get the best possible start in life. It will provide an evidence-based framework for a national approach to early childhood with a focus on children aged 0-5 years, including the antenatal period. It is hoped that the National Agenda will maximise the impact of existing activity, ensure available resources are directed to priority issues and children most in need, and inform future investment decisions. Four broad action areas (healthy young families; early learning and care; supporting parents and families; and child-friendly

communities) have been highlighted for national attention as part of the draft National Agenda for Early Childhood.

- Implementation of the *National Plan for Foster Children, Young People and their Carers*. The Plan, which was endorsed in July 2004 by all Ministers responsible for child welfare, sets out how Australian and state and territory governments will work together to improve outcomes for children and young people in foster care, focusing on sharing information on good practice and improving cross-jurisdictional collaboration around training, research, uniform data collection and support. Implementation is occurring over a 2-year period.

- Development of a *National Framework for Creating Safe Environments for Children (Organisations, Employees and Volunteers)* Ministers at the federal and state and territory level of government have agreed to develop a National Framework that will help protect children from abuse or exploitation. The framework, which is being developed over the next two years has a focus on four key action areas: building capacity for child safe organisations; background checking for employees and volunteers; information between states and territories; and implementation, monitoring and review of progress.

- The *Family Violence Partnership Program (FVPP)* is a new initiative announced by the Australian Government in the 2004 Budget. The FVPP seeks to fund initiatives preventing or addressing Indigenous family violence, sexual assault and child abuse. The program (\$37.3m over 4 years) aims to work with state and territory governments to assist them to better meet their responsibilities in relation to family violence and child abuse in Indigenous communities; build on the Australian Government's commitment to tackling family violence in Indigenous communities; and develop local solutions to issues that contribute to violence, such as alcohol and drug use, and address causal factors to family violence, particularly socio-economic and participatory issues, to effect sustainable change.

- The *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health* sets out the framework for action by governments in Indigenous health for the next five to ten years. The Strategic Framework supports the development of specific child and maternal health responses, including an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child and Maternal Health Policy.

- Similarly, the *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing* also under development, will strengthen the infrastructure to support the health of children and parents in this vulnerable group.

C Prevention

Information is sought specifically on improved access to education for all children.

State and Territory Ministers Relevant Ministers from the states and territories have been working with the Australian Government on common and agreed national goals and strategies to set benchmarks and improve various aspects of education. As part of the Australian *National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty First Century*, state and

territory Ministers of Education agreed to a national literacy and numeracy goal. The goal is that students should have attained the skills of numeracy and English literacy such that every student should be numerate, able to read, write, spell and communicate at an appropriate level, and the learning outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students improve, over time, to match those of other students.

Ministers have also agreed to a *National Literacy and Numeracy Plan* to give focus to and support the achievement of the goal. The *Measurement Framework for National Key Performance Measures in Schooling* gives effect to the measurement aspects of the *National Literacy and Numeracy Plan*. The *National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and Projects* and the *Strategic Assistance for Improving Student Outcomes* programs support the policy initiatives.

The Australian Government has a number of policies, programs and projects targeting Indigenous people. These initiatives generally focus on improving involvement, access, participation and outcomes of Indigenous children and young people in education. Improving English literacy and numeracy skills feature prominently, given their foundational nature for success in education, training and employment.

D Protection

Legislation and international instruments

Australia has criminal offences relating to slavery, sexual servitude and deceptive recruiting for sexual services. These offences in the Commonwealth Criminal Code criminalise some of the most serious forms of exploitation associated with trafficking in persons. In the case of sexual servitude and deceptive recruiting for sexual services, higher penalties apply where the victim is under the age of 18.

While these offences target most trafficking in persons activity, on 31 August 2004 the Australian Government released an exposure draft of new offences for public comment, in the Criminal Code Amendment (People Trafficking Offences) Bill 2004. The new offences would comprehensively criminalise all aspects of trafficking in persons and carry penalties of up to 20 years imprisonment.

Australian law also contains child sex tourism offences. The Commonwealth Crimes Act contains offences applying to Australian citizens and residents who engage in sexual activity with children under the age of 16 while overseas. It is also an offence to incite, encourage or gain benefit from such activity (such as organising sex tours). This legislation ensures that Australians engaging in such activity may be prosecuted in Australia if they evade prosecution overseas. Similar offences apply to conduct within Australia under state and territory criminal law.

Australia has also enacted protections for child witnesses and child complainants in proceedings for child sex tourism and other federal sex offences. These protections ensure that child witnesses are able to testify as freely and effectively as possible.

Child sex offenders are increasingly exploiting the anonymity of the Internet to forge relationships with children as a first step in luring them for sexual abuse. The Internet also provides them with a vehicle to trade in child pornography and child abuse material.

The Australian Government has recently moved to ensure that behavior of this type is subject to serious criminal sanction. The Commonwealth *Crimes Legislation Amendment (Telecommunications Offences and Other Measures) Act 2004* ('the Act') received Royal Assent on 31 August 2004. The relevant child pornography and grooming offences included in this Act come into force on 1 March 2005.

The new offences target the use of the Internet to access, transmit and make available child pornography and child abuse material, as well as the possession or production of such material with intent to place it on the Internet.

Specifically, the Act makes it an offence to:

- use a carriage service to access, transmit, publish, make available or otherwise distribute child pornography material (section 474.19)
- possess, control, produce, supply or obtain child pornography material with the intention that it be used to commit an offence against section 474.19 (section 474.20)
- use a carriage service to access, transmit, publish, make available or otherwise distribute child abuse material (section 474.22), and
- possess, control, produce, supply or obtain child abuse material with the intention that it be used to commit an offence against section 474.22 (section 474.23).

The Act also makes it an offence to use a carriage service to procure or 'groom' a person who is under 16 years of age, for the purpose of engaging in sexual activity with that person or so that a third person can engage in sexual activity with that person.

In addition, under this Act law enforcement agencies are able to proactively police the Internet by assuming the identity of a fictitious child and interact with potential predatory adults. This type of operation will facilitate the arrest of predatory adults before they have the opportunity to sexually abuse a real child.

Progressing ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (the Protocol) was developed to protect children from the worst forms of commercial sexual exploitation. It spells out in greater detail some of the important protections for children contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Australia was an active participant in the development and negotiation of the text of the Protocol.

Australia signed the Protocol on 18 December 2001 and the Australian Government is pursuing ratification as a priority. The Australian Government's policy on ratifying international instruments is that ratification should not occur until compliance with a treaty is ensured under Australian law.

The Australian Attorney-General has received advice from all state and territory Attorneys-General on whether state or territory laws comply with the requirements of the Protocol, and the extent and timing of any proposed amendments. The Attorneys-General have agreed to introduce any amendments necessary to ensure compliance with the Protocol, and that the Protocol should be ratified by Australia, subject to the necessary Cabinet approvals.

The Commonwealth identified one necessary amendment to ensure that Commonwealth law complied with the Protocol. The Crimes Legislation Amendment (Telecommunications Offences and Other Measures) Act (No. 2) 2004 amended the Crimes (Aviation) Act 1991 to ensure that child prostitution committed on Australian registered aircraft outside of Australia is an offence.

E Recovery and Reintegration

Financial security is a key contributor to good environments for families and children. In July 2000, the Australian Government (as part of the New Tax System) introduced new family assistance payments to help families and sole parents with the cost of raising children and child care. Ninety per cent (90%) of all Australian families benefit from these payments and in 2003-04 more than \$A20 billion is being provided in assistance

Commercial sexual exploitation of children in Australia is not widespread. Research has shown that the majority of sexual exploitation of children within Australia occurs in families and institutions rather than being commercial and organised in nature. In response, the Commonwealth government has continued to sharpen its focus on the importance of prevention and early intervention approaches to complement those efforts being implemented by the state and territory governments in fulfilling their roles in statutory child protection. It has funded new initiatives and built on a number of those which were being piloted in 2001.

Significant initiatives at the Australian Government (Federal level) include:

- Funding of \$465m over 4 years for the renewed *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy* (2004-08). The aims of the renewed Stronger Families and Communities Strategy are to:

- ❖ Help families and communities build better futures for children;
- ❖ Build family and community capacity; and
- ❖ Support relationships between families and communities in which they live.

These aims will be achieved through:

- ❖ Prevention and early intervention directed at influencing children's early pathways, to increase the likelihood they will reach adulthood equipped to lead happy, healthy and contributing lives;
- ❖ Starting early (within the first five years of life);
- ❖ Focussing effort in areas where there is likely to be the greatest possible impact on children's ongoing development.

The Australian Government provides targeted programs and services to youth at risk including homeless young people and those at risk of homelessness, thus limiting the risk that they may be forced to participate in opportunistic behaviour. Initiatives include:

- *Youth Activities Services (YAS) and Family Liaison Worker (FLW) Program*. The Youth Activities Services (YAS) and Family Liaison Worker (FLW) program supports young people and their families to build self-reliance, strengthen family relationships and encourage community involvement. YAS and FLW targets young people aged 11-16 years, who are at risk, still live at home and attend school. The program provides a range of diverse,

challenging, creative and structured activities (such as active sports, personal development, band nights, dances and building self-esteem) mostly outside school hours and in school holidays. FLW provides a specific family component and supports young people and their families by helping them deal with issues affecting their well being as a family through positive professional and practical support, and guidance.

- *Job Placement, Employment and Training (JPET) Program* The Job Placement, Employment and Training (JPET) Program assists young people aged 15-21 years who are disadvantaged by the lack of secure housing, employment and educational opportunities, or through geographic isolation.

JPET provides flexible, responsive and innovative services to help young people whose life experiences have been marred by instability and insecurity. These services aim to stabilise the young person through assistance with finding accommodation and income support as well as helping them secure career paths and sustainable futures.

- *Reconnect* Reconnect is a program delivered by community organisations to help young people aged between 12 and 18, who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and their families. Reconnect provides early intervention and confidential support for young people through counselling, adolescent mediation and practical support. The initiative aims to improve the level of engagement of homeless young people, or those at risk of homelessness, with family, work, education, training and the community.

State and territory governments have also changed their focus in recent years and while providing significant additional funding to their crisis services, they are also funding initiatives that help build strengths in families, rather than focusing on the dysfunctional aspects of family life. *Families First* in New South Wales; Queensland's *Putting Families First*; Victoria's *Best Start*; Tasmania's *Our Kids Action Plan 2004-2007*; South Australia's *Every Chance for Every Child*; and Western Australia's *Building Blocks* are examples of this approach.

In addition a number of states and territories have also announced increased spending on child protection. For example:

- New South Wales – in December 2002 an extra \$A1 billion over five years was pledged to the Department of Community Services to address child abuse and neglect. This will be spent to improve the quality of services including additional funds for out of home care;
- Queensland – in December 2003 a \$A154 million funding increase over five years was approved to fight abuse of children in foster care;
- Western Australia – in December 2002 an extra \$A67 million over four years was allocated to address child protection issues in Indigenous communities; and
- Australian Capital Territory – in January 2004 an extra \$A1.8 million in emergency funding was to be injected into the most urgent areas.

UPDATE OF AUSTRALIA'S POLICIES AND PROGRAMS FOR THE POST-YOKOHAMA MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC REGIONAL COMMITMENT AND ACTION PLAN AGAINST COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN (CSEC)

Bangkok 8-10 November 2004

The Commonwealth Government is very concerned about all forms of child abuse, including the sexual exploitation of children. As a signatory to the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action (First World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children 1996), Australia undertook to develop a National Plan of Action by the year 2000.

Responsibility for domestic implementation of Australia's efforts to combat child sexual exploitation is shared between the Commonwealth and the State and Territory Governments. In August 2000, the Minister for Community Services launched *Tomorrow's Children: Australia's National Plan of Action Against the Commercial Exploitation of Children*. The report was the culmination of a successful collaboration between a number of federal departments, all states and territories and non-government organisations.

Australia is currently developing a National Plan of Action in response to *A World Fit for Children*, the outcomes document from the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children, held in May 2002. Australia's National Plan will outline how Australia's existing and proposed child-related policies, legislation, strategies and specific programs work together to form Australia's response to *A World Fit for Children*.

Commercial sexual exploitation of children in Australia is not widespread. Research has shown that the majority of sexual exploitation of children within Australia occurs in families and institutions rather than being commercial and organised in nature.

In response, the Commonwealth government has continued to sharpen its focus on the importance of prevention and early intervention approaches to complement those efforts being implemented by the state and territory governments in fulfilling their role in statutory child protection.

By strengthening families and communities, governments and community organisations aim to enhance the protective factors and reduce the vulnerability factors that can place our children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation.

Only by tackling social conditions like family breakdown, homelessness, poverty, drug use, unemployment and social isolation can the well being and safety of children and young people at risk be assured in the long-term. Strong families support and care for children, nurturing both their physical and emotional health; and strong communities can create safe, child-friendly environments.

Some broad initiatives at the federal level include:

- *Family assistance and the income support safety net*

Financial security is a key contributor to good environments for families and children. In July 2000, the Australian Government (as part of the New Tax System) introduced new family assistance payments to help families and sole parents with the cost of

raising children and child care. Ninety per cent (90%) of all Australian families benefit from these payments and in 2003-04 more than \$A20 billion is being provided in assistance

Financial support for families is complemented by services to help parents to make the most of opportunities for social and economic participation. There have been a number of reforms in recent years to help increase economic and social participation and reducing reliance on welfare, within a family wellbeing paradigm.

- *Strategic investment in early childhood*

Research has shown that children's early experiences set the stage for their later development in many ways. Nurturing relationships and a warm, loving home life, an active learning environment, good nutrition and opportunities to play with other children are important in assisting children to develop to their full potential. In contrast, a difficult beginning can pose multiple risks for children's health and wellbeing. It can have lasting impacts on their chance of reaching their full potential over the course of their life. There are clear indications that well designed, concerted action in the early years can make a difference. Some of the initiatives that target early childhood are:

- *Development of a National Agenda for Early Childhood*

The National Agenda for Early Childhood is currently being finalised. It aims to ensure that children get the best possible start in life. It will provide an evidence-based framework for a national approach to early childhood with a focus on children aged 0-5 years, including the antenatal period. It is hoped that the National Agenda will maximise the impact of existing activity, ensure available resources are directed to priority issues and children most in need, and inform future investment decisions.

Four broad action areas (healthy young families; early learning and care; supporting parents and families; and child-friendly communities) have been highlighted for national attention as part of the draft National Agenda for Early Childhood.

- *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy (SFCS)*

Part of the Australian Government's commitment to early childhood is through the renewed Stronger Families and Communities Strategy (2004-08). Total funding for this initiative is now \$465m over 4 years. The aims of the renewed Stronger Families and Communities Strategy are to:

- ❖ Help families and communities build better futures for children;
- ❖ Build family and community capacity; and
- ❖ Support relationships between families and communities in which they live.

These aims will be achieved through:

- ❖ Prevention and early intervention directed at influencing children's early pathways, to increase the likelihood they will reach adulthood equipped to lead happy, healthy and contributing lives;
- ❖ Starting early (within the first five years of life);

- ❖ Focussing effort in areas where there is likely to be the greatest possible impact on children's ongoing development;
- ❖ Working across multiple levels – the child, the family and the community; and
- ❖ Working for system change – strengthening existing platforms for family support and children's development at the community level, engaging 'hard to reach families,' enhancing children's access to services and improving service cohesion to better meet the needs of families and children.

- *Child protection*

Child protection and welfare matters are primarily the responsibility of state and territory governments. Each state and territory has its own child protection legislation, policies and practices and therefore responsibility rests primarily with each state and territory to introduce any necessary reforms to child protection laws.

Many state and territory governments have undertaken recent reviews of their child protection systems in an effort to make improvements. Many have also announced new initiatives and spending on child protection, for example:

- New South Wales – in December 2002 an extra \$A1 billion over five years was pledged to the Department of Community Services to address child abuse and neglect. This will be spent to improve the quality of services including additional funds for out of home care;
- Queensland – in December 2003 a \$A154 million funding increase over five years was approved to fight abuse of children in foster care;
- Western Australia – in December 2002 an extra \$A67 million over four years was allocated to address child protection issues in Indigenous communities; and
- Australian Capital Territory – in January 2004 an extra \$A1.8 million in emergency funding was to be injected into the most urgent areas.

- *Child abuse prevention*

Child abuse and neglect can have serious consequences for children into their adult lives and can impact on a whole spectrum of life chances. The Australian Government is committed to working in collaboration with state and territory governments to build on prevention and early intervention strategies to prevent child abuse.

- The *National Plan for Foster Children, Young People and their Carers* was endorsed by all Ministers responsible for child welfare in July 2004. The National Plan sets out how Australian and state and territory governments will work together to improve outcomes for children and young people in foster care, focusing on sharing information on good practice and improving cross-jurisdictional collaboration around training, research, uniform data collection and support. Implementation of the Plan is occurring over a 2-year period.
- *National Framework for Creating Safe Environments for Children (Organisations, Employees and Volunteers)* Ministers at the federal and

state and territory level of government have agreed to develop a National Framework that will help protect children from abuse or exploitation. The framework, which is being developed over the next two years has a focus on four key action areas: building capacity for child safe organisations; background checking for employees and volunteers; information between states and territories; and implementation, monitoring and review of progress.

The Australian Government's policy focus in the area of child protection is on prevention and early intervention strategies and promoting best practice. Child abuse prevention initiatives include supporting parents in their parenting role, piloting new initiatives to test their effectiveness and national applicability, research, community education and national data collection activities.

- *National mechanisms*

National mechanisms implemented by the Australian Government to support child protection include funding for the Australian Council for Children and Parenting; the National Child Protection Clearinghouse; National Child Protection Week and the biennial National Child Protection Awards.

- *Child abuse prevention initiatives*

Extra funding has also been specifically allocated to early childhood intervention and prevention through initiatives such as through the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy and through a range of other initiatives including the *Family Relationships Services Program* and *Responding Early Assisting Children (REACH) initiative*. The objective of these programs is to provide families with timely access to community resources which will improve their capacity to respond appropriately to children's needs for care and stimulation within a safe environment.

State and territory governments have also changed their focus in recent years and while providing significant additional funding to their crisis services, they are also funding initiatives that help build strengths in families, rather than focusing on the dysfunctional aspects of family life. Families First in New South Wales; Queensland's Putting Families First and Western Australia's Building Blocks are examples of this approach.

• *Strategies to reduce homelessness*

The Australian Government provides targeted programs and services to youth at risk including homeless young people and those at risk of homelessness. Its response to youth homelessness focuses on dealing with the immediate crises, prevention and early intervention.

- *Youth Activities Services (YAS) and Family Liaison Worker (FLW)*

The Youth Activities Services (YAS) and Family Liaison Worker (FLW) program supports young people and their families to build self-reliance, strengthen family relationships and encourage community involvement. YAS and FLW targets young people aged 11-16 years, who are at risk, still live at home and attend school. The program provides a range of diverse, challenging, creative and structured activities (such as active sports, personal development, band nights, dances and building self-esteem)

mostly outside school hours and in school holidays. FLW provides a specific family component and supports young people and their families by helping them deal with issues affecting their well being as a family through positive professional and practical support, and guidance.

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- *Reconnect*

Reconnect is a program delivered by community organisations to help young people aged between 12 and 18, who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and their families. Reconnect provides early intervention and confidential support for young people through counselling, adolescent mediation and practical support.

Reconnect aims to improve the level of engagement of homeless young people, or those at risk of homelessness, with family, work, education, training and the community.

- *Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)*

The Commonwealth and State and Territory governments jointly fund 1,200 Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) services Australia-wide to provide transitional accommodation and/or related support services to people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless to achieve the maximum possible degree of self-reliance and independence.

- *Transition to Independent Living Allowance*

Young people, particularly those who have been in state supported care and are approaching their independence, may be a group at risk of exploitation. The Transition to Independent Living Allowance aims to help young people between

15-25 years of age who are approaching their independence and making the transition from state-supported care arrangements to independent living.

The Transition to Independent Living Allowance is administered by non-government services. This one-off assistance with a value of up to \$A1,000 assists young people exiting care arrangements. Funds are used to purchase approved goods and/or services related to each individual's specific needs in their transition to independence.

- *Education*

Relevant Ministers from the states and territories have been working with the Australian Government on common and agreed national goals and strategies to set benchmarks and improve various aspects of education. As part of the Australian *National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty First Century*, state and territory Ministers of Education agreed to a national literacy and numeracy goal. The goal is that students should have attained the skills of numeracy and English literacy such that every student should be numerate, able to read, write, spell and communicate at an appropriate level, and the learning outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students improve, over time, to match those of other students.

Ministers have also agreed to a *National Literacy and Numeracy Plan* to give focus to and support the achievement of the goal. The *Measurement Framework for National Key Performance Measures in Schooling* gives effect to the measurement aspects of the *National Literacy and Numeracy Plan*. The *National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and Projects* and the *Strategic Assistance for Improving Student Outcomes* programs support the policy initiatives.

- *Indigenous initiatives*

Indigenous Australians have markedly poorer outcomes over their life course – in health, education, representation in the foster care, contact with the criminal justice system, employment and expected lifespan.

While Indigenous people are able to access all mainstream services, the Australian Government is working to improve the economic and social well being of Indigenous Australians through the delivery of a range of Indigenous-specific programs and services and ensure that generic initiatives are sensitive to the needs of Indigenous people, their families and communities.

- The *Indigenous Community Coordination Trials* are examples of the Australian Government working closely with state and territory governments and local Indigenous communities to improve service delivery and outcomes for Indigenous people. The governments have agreed to work on a 'whole of governments' basis in the Trials through partnership agreements with Indigenous people.
- In 2004, the Australian Government moved towards a whole of government approach to service delivery to Indigenous Australians more generally and has established multi-agency Indigenous Coordination Centres covering remote, regional and urban locations.
- The *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health* sets out the framework for action by governments in Indigenous health for the next five to ten years. The Strategic Framework supports the development of specific child and maternal health responses, including an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child and Maternal Health Policy. Similarly, the *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing*, also under development, will strengthen the infrastructure to support the health of children and parents in this vulnerable group.
- The Australian Government has a number of policies, programs and projects targeting Indigenous people. These initiatives generally focus on improving involvement, access, participation and outcomes of Indigenous children and young people in education. Improving English literacy and numeracy skills

feature prominently, given their foundational nature for success in education, training and employment.

- *The Family Violence Partnership Program (FVPP)* is a new initiative announced by the Australian Government in the 2004 Budget. The FVPP seeks to fund initiatives preventing or addressing Indigenous family violence, sexual assault and child abuse. The program (\$37.3m over 4 years) aims to:

- leverage greater action and commitment on the part of states and territories to meet their responsibilities in relation to family violence and child abuse in Indigenous communities;
- build on the Australian Government's commitment to tackling family violence in Indigenous communities; and
- develop local solutions to issues that contribute to violence, such as alcohol and drug use, and address causal factors to family violence, particularly socio-economic and participatory issues, to effect sustainable change.

- *The Family Violence Regional Activities Program* aims to:

- prevent family violence, sexual assault and child abuse and strengthen child protection initiatives by undertaking relevant activities and initiatives; and
- support local communities to develop sustainable solutions that address the needs and issues as they relate to individuals, families and communities.

- *Children and Young People's Participation*

The Australian Government is committed to providing opportunities for young people to have a say in shaping the policies that affect them. Initiatives supporting this include the:

- *National Youth Roundtable* – which each year brings together 50 young Australians aged 15 to 24 to meet with the Government to discuss issues affecting people. Roundtable members undertake a series of consultations to develop a picture of the views and attitudes of young people, which are reported back to Government.
- *National Indigenous Youth Leadership Group* – which brings together 15 young Indigenous Australians aged 18 to 24 years, to discuss with the Government their experiences and perspectives about issues important to them; advise the Government on the most effective ways to empower Indigenous young people in their communities; and promote positive images of Indigenous young people.
- As part the development of Australia's National Plan of Action for '*A World Fit for Children*' the federal Government commissioned the New South Wales Commission for Children and Youth to consult with children and young people on their views on what constitutes a 'world fit for children'.

- *Other initiatives*

Childwise 'Travel with Care' Project - Child Wise is a non-Government organisation, formerly known as End Child Prostitution and Trafficking Australia (ECPAT Australia), which began in Australia in 1993. In 2000 ECPAT Australia received funding from the Australian Government to produce a brochure, educational video, training materials and newsletters to address child sex tourism. In May 2003 further funding was provided to update and distribute the *Travel with Care* leaflets posters throughout Australia, and to produce a television advertisement, a radio advertisement and an in-flight information advertisement.

Persistent poverty has been identified as a significant cause of sexual exploitation of children and other forms of child abuse such as exploitative and hazardous child labour. A primary focus of Australia's aid program is to reduce the incidence and severity of poverty in the Asia-Pacific region. In targeting the root causes of poverty, assistance is directed to the general areas of education, health, water resources, income generation and governance.

Australia also cooperates with and assists regional countries in combating child sex tourism, and reintegrating trafficked and other vulnerable women and children in the region. The Bali Process has raised regional governments' awareness of the risks faced by people who engage the services of people smugglers and of the need to assist and protect victims of trafficking. To ensure a sustained and coordinated effort to combat these problems the Australian Federal Police has strengthened its bilateral relationships with police forces in other regional countries.