

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

10.11 The committee recommends that the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) include the following measures in the third action plan (2015-2018) for the National Framework:

- accountability for Commonwealth, state and territory governments to ensure compliance with the objectives of the National Framework;
- practical guidance for state and territories for implementing the *National Standards for out-of-home care* at a local level;
- integrating all projects under the National Framework with related frameworks including the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* and the *National Drug Strategy 2010–2015*; and
- associated funding to assist the National Framework achieve its stated objectives.

Recommendation 2

10.15 The committee recommends that the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) work with states and territories to address data gaps in Child Protection National Minimum Data Set (CP NMDS) and other data sets of children in out-of-home care regarding:

- children and young people with disability;
- children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- relationship between children and young people and their kinship carers;
- role of permanency planning and permanent care placements for children and young people;
- data collected by community service organisations; and
- how outcomes for children and young people in out-of-home care compare with the general population.

Recommendation 3

10.17 The committee recommends that AIHW work with states and territories to develop and implement a data collection project that would provide general data on the reasons children are placed in out-of-home care, consistent with the recommendation by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Recommendation 4

10.19 The committee recommends that COAG review the National Framework to address recommendations by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that the National Framework include provisions to protect the rights of children, particularly those with disability.

Recommendation 5

10.22 The committee recommends that COAG include in the third action plan (2015-2018) of the National Framework a project to improve participation by children and young people in decision making processes, including:

- entry into care (where appropriate);
- placement decisions;
- family contact and reunion; and
- transition from care.

10.23 This project should draw from the findings of AIHW's national survey into views of children and young people in out-of-home care.

Recommendation 6

10.24 The committee recommends that COAG develop and implement nationally consistent powers for independent child commissioners and guardians to:

- review individual out-of-home care cases;
- address complaints and concerns by children and young people;
- ensure the voice of children and young people is heard in all decision-making processes about placements and case planning; and
- provide community visitors to visit all out-of-home care placements.

Recommendation 7

10.29 The committee recommends that COAG include in the third action plan (2015-2018) of the National Framework, a project to develop and implement:

- national therapeutic care standards; and
- an evaluation of best practice models of therapeutic care across all types of care (drawing from best practice models in Australia and overseas), with a view to implementing therapeutic models across all jurisdictions.

Recommendation 8

10.30 The committee recommends that states and territories increase resources available to fund therapeutic models of care, based on evidence-based evaluations of existing and proposed models.

Recommendation 9

10.32 The committee recommends that COAG include in the third action plan (2015-2018) of the National Framework a project to develop and implement a nationally consistent approach to integrating child protection and disability services to ensure children are screened for disability and complex health needs (such as FASD) and referred to appropriate services, and have access to disability services throughout their time in care.

Recommendation 10

10.34 The committee recommends that COAG include in the third action plan (2015-2018) of the National Framework a project to develop and implement specific supports for children and families in UHMs and international kinship care placements.

Recommendation 11

10.36 The committee recommends that COAG include in the third action plan (2015-2018) of the National Framework a project to develop and implement a nationally consistent approach to permanency planning. This should include adding a measure on permanency planning into the National Standards for out-of-home care.

Recommendation 12

10.42 The committee recommends that COAG include in the third action plan (2015-2018) of the National Framework a project to develop a nationally consistent approach to legal forms of permanence (including guardianship orders and adoption) that ensure children maintain connection to their families and carers continue to receive financial and practical support.

Recommendation 13

10.43 The committee recommends that COAG include in the third action plan (2015-2018) of the National Framework a project to consider how to improve access to legally permanent placements (including guardianship orders and adoptions) for children and young people in out-of-home care, where these arrangements may provide the safest and most stable placements.

Recommendation 14

10.45 The committee recommends that the Department of Social Services, Department of Human Services and Department of Immigration and Border Protection review parental consent requirements for identity documents (including passports, Medicare cards and citizenship) to remove barriers to accessibility for children and young people in out-of-home care.

Recommendation 15

10.47 The committee recommends that COAG include in the third action plan (2015-2018) of the National Framework a project to develop and implement strategies to improve health outcomes for children and young people in care, including:

- access to health services, particularly youth mental health treatment and support services; and
- consideration of health outcomes in case planning.

Recommendation 16

10.48 The committee recommends that the Department of Health introduce a separate Medicare item for children in out-of-home care to improve access to health assessments and treatment, including mental health.

Recommendation 17

10.51 The committee recommends that COAG include in the third action plan (2015-2018) of the National Framework a project to develop and implement a nationally consistent approach to:

- additional education support for children and young people in out-of-home care; and
- increasing participation by young people in out-of-home care in education and training opportunities.

Recommendation 18

10.52 The committee recommends that states and territories ensure all children in out-of-home care have updated education plans.

Recommendation 19

10.56 The committee recommends that AIHW work with states and territories to develop a data set on outcomes for young people transitioning from care up to 21 years of age, including the following indicators:

- connection to family and/or carers;
- education and employment;
- housing; and
- health (including mental health).

Recommendation 20

10.57 The committee recommends that COAG include in the third action plan (2015-2018) of the National Framework a project to develop and implement a nationally consistent framework for transitioning from care, with a focus on improving:

- health outcomes;
- access to higher education;
- employment options; and
- access and support for securing suitable housing.

Recommendation 21

10.58 The committee recommends that the Australian Government increase the Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA) for young people transitioning from care. The committee further recommends that the Department of Social Services review existing post-care support programs to identify opportunities to assist young people transitioning from care.

Recommendation 22

10.59 The committee recommends that states and territories raise the age to which young people continue to receive ongoing post-care support to 21 years of age.

Recommendation 23

10.64 The committee recommends that COAG include in the third action plan (2015-2018) of the National Framework a project to develop and implement a nationally consistent family support framework addressing:

- universal services targeted at improving the wellbeing of all children and young people;
- secondary interventions to support children and families at risk of child protection interventions;
- respite services and 'shared cared' models of support aimed at family preservation;

- evidence-based evaluations of family support services to determine best practice models; and
- equitable funding models for family support services.

10.65 The committee further recommends that this family support framework should consider the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, families and children with disability and CALD communities.

Recommendation 24

10.67 The committee recommends that COAG consider a nationally consistent approach to funding advocacy and support groups for parents with children in or at risk of entering out-of-home care.

Recommendation 25

10.69 The committee recommends that COAG include in the third action plan (2015-2018) of the National Framework a project to develop and implement a nationally consistent approach to improving participation by children and families in decision making processes, including Family Group Conferencing and other alternative dispute resolution measures.

Recommendation 26

10.71 The committee recommends that COAG include in the third action plan (2015-2018) of the National Framework the development of nationally consistent mechanisms, such as independent bodies, for managing complaints from families and investigating individual cases.

Recommendation 27

10.72 The committee recommends that COAG include in the third action plan (2015-2018) of the National Framework the introduction of national accreditation and registration of child protection workers, including those employed by government departments and NGOs.

Recommendation 28

10.74 The committee recommends that COAG include in the third action plan (2015-2018) of the National Framework a project to develop and implement nationally consistent family support services including support for families with contact and reunification.

Recommendation 29

10.75 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government provide increased resources for family support services.

Recommendation 30

10.78 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government improve access to legal and other advice and support available to families in child protection matters both before and during court proceedings, including through increased funding for relevant legal assistance providers. The committee further recommends particular consideration be given to improving access to legal and other advice and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families experiencing family violence.

Recommendation 31

10.81 The committee recommends that COAG include in the third action plan (2015-2018) of the National Framework a project to develop and implement a nationally consistent approach to building the capacity of Aboriginal community controlled agencies (ACCAs) to become integrated into all aspects of the child protection system for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, including:

- training Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support workers;
- providing family support services;
- implementation of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle;
- involvement and responsibility for all decision making processes; and
- delivering out-of-home care services.

10.82 The committee further recommends that state and territory governments review Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander overrepresentation in out-of-home care as a matter of priority and provide additional resources for family support services to address the causes of social disadvantage.

Recommendation 32

10.83 The committee recommends that COAG include in the third action plan (2015-2018) of the National Framework a project to develop and implement mandatory cultural competence training for all services working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait children and families. This training should be delivered by specialised local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services, including those with expertise working in remote communities.

Recommendation 33

10.86 The committee recommends that the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) review the adequacy and availability of funding for children with disability at National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) trial sites, including:

- early intervention funding to support children with disability remaining at home in the care of their parents; and
- case management support for children with disability and families with disability to access family support services to assist children remaining at home in the care of their parents

Recommendation 34

10.90 The committee recommends that COAG include in the third action plan (2015-2018) of the National Framework a project to develop and implement nationally consistent financial and practical (including training and case-worker) support for statutory and informal relative/kinship carers. This should include:

- establishment of a national peak body for relative/kinship carers;
- accreditation and training of relative/kinship carers;
- increasing allowances available to relative/kinship carers; and
- evaluation and development of nationally consistent best practice models of supported relative/kinship care.

Recommendation 35

10.91 The committee recommends that COAG include in the third action plan (2015-2018) of the National Framework a project to improve the capacity for emergency respite placements to determine best placements for children and young people.

Recommendation 36

10.93 The committee recommends that COAG include in the third action plan (2015-2018) of the National Framework a project to better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in relative/kinship care, including:

- streamlining accreditation and assessment process for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship carers; and
- implementing the Winangay kinship resources to improve relationship between carers and child protection authorities.

Recommendation 37

10.96 The committee recommends that COAG include in the third action plan (2015-2018) of the National Framework a nationally consistent strategy to support and accredit foster carers to improve recruitment and retention. This should also address nationally consistent rates of financial support, case-worker support and training of foster carers.

Recommendation 38

10.97 The committee recommends that COAG implement a nationally consistent, best practice model of professional foster care.

Recommendation 39

10.100 The committee recommends that COAG include in the third action plan (2015-2018) of the National Framework a project to develop and implement a nationally consistent approach to:

- **mandatory training for all residential care workers;**
- **training qualifications and allowances for carers (including increasing allowances for carers); and**
- **an evaluation how the role of NGOs in service delivery affects the outcomes for children in care.**

