

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
SOCIAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO
2015-16 Additional Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: 2.1 Families and Communities

Question No: SQ16-000155

Topic: Children and Families Secretaries Group

Hansard page: Written

Senator Carol Brown asked:

How many working groups have been established under the Children and Families Secretaries Group?

- a. How often did each of the working groups meet in 2015?
- b. What is the membership of each of these working groups?
- c. Do each of these groups have terms of reference or some kind of work program to guide their work? If yes, please provide a copy of these to the Committee?

Answer:

The Children and Families Secretaries (CAFS) is an informal group with oversight of identified national priorities, providing jurisdictions with a platform to collaborate on innovative policy approaches to child and family issues.

CAFS has oversight of two subgroups the Children and Families Data Network (CAFDaN) and the National Forum for Protecting Australia's Children (the National Forum). When required, CAFS may establish time-limited or subject specific working groups to deliver agreed actions. These subgroups and working groups are listed below:

Subgroups

<i>Subgroup</i>	<i>2015 meetings</i>	<i>Membership</i>	<i>Description</i>
CAFDaN	Two meetings	Senior officers responsible for children and families data and research in their jurisdiction, and chaired by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).	An interjurisdictional network that provides authorisation and strategic oversight of collection, development and reporting work associated with national children and family services data.
The National Forum	Five meetings	Representatives from Commonwealth, state and territory governments, and the non-government sector represented by members of the Coalition of Organisations Committed to the Safety and Wellbeing of Australia's Children (the NGO Coalition).	The Forum has a strategic focus on prevention and early intervention approaches under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children (NFPAC) and an emphasis on strengthening the engagement of civil society organisations to prevent child abuse and neglect. Terms of Reference at Attachment A .

Subject specific working groups

<i>Working group</i>	<i>2015 meetings</i>	<i>Membership</i>	<i>Description</i>
Carer information sharing interjurisdictional working group	Three meetings	Officer – level representatives from all child protection policy areas in each of the jurisdictions, and the Commonwealth. Chaired by NSW.	Working group guides the development of the interjurisdictional carer information sharing project.
Evaluation Working Group	Two meetings	Officer – level representatives from all child protection policy areas in each of the jurisdictions, and the Commonwealth. Chaired by Commonwealth.	Working group set up to guide the development the National Framework Baseline Evaluation.
Annual Report Working Group	Two meetings	Officer – level representatives from all child protection policy areas in each of the jurisdictions, and the Commonwealth. Chaired by Commonwealth.	Working group set up to guide the development the National Framework Annual Report.
Data sharing working group	Two meetings	Commonwealth (DSS) and state and territory officials. There are five priority projects being progressed under this working group – while these are national projects, not every jurisdiction participates in each project.	Established to progress key work on data sharing which would enable early intervention and prevention.
Out of Home Care working group	One meeting	Officials from the Commonwealth (DSS) and each state and territory government.	Working group to examine national Out of Home Care issues.
Non-parent formal carers project working group	One meeting	Representatives from the Commonwealth (DSS), the Australian Institute of Family Studies and each state and territory government department responsible for child protection and family services.	Working group to guide the development and implementation of the non-parent formal carers survey.

Project working group – AIHW report on educational outcomes for children in care	Two meetings	Technical representatives from state and territory child protection departments and education departments in the six participating jurisdictions (NSW, Vic, WA, Tas, ACT and NT), chaired by the AIHW.	Working group to link child protection data and NAPLAN data.
National Standards Survey Working Group (NSSWG)	Two meetings	Technical representatives from state and territory child protection departments implementing the survey, chaired by the DSS/AIHW.	Working group to progress implementation of the national survey of children in Out of Home Care.

NATIONAL FORUM FOR PROTECTING AUSTRALIA'S CHILDREN

Terms of Reference

Preamble

The National Forum for Protecting Australia's Children (the Forum) is a group of representatives from Commonwealth, State and Territory governments, and the non-government sector represented by members of the Coalition of Organisations Committed to the Safety and Wellbeing of Australia's Children (NGO Coalition).

The Forum has a strategic focus on prevention and early intervention approaches under the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children* (National Framework), and an emphasis on strengthening the engagement of civil society organisations to prevent child abuse and neglect.

Role

The role of the Forum includes, but is not limited to:

- Progressing the implementation and delivery of selected actions under the National Framework, with a particular focus on national priorities requiring collaboration between jurisdictions and the non-government sector;
- Lead relevant consultations with key stakeholders to engage the broader community and civil society organisations in the National Framework;
- Oversee the implementation of a communications strategy for the National Framework and its action plans;
- Provide a forum for discussion on priority areas requiring tripartite collaboration, including opportunities to fill the research gaps, expanding the evidence base to support the National Framework's objectives; and
- Provide input into National Framework reporting and evaluation activities.

Identify issues and priorities relevant to the objectives of the National Framework to be raised to the Children and Families Secretaries Group (CAFS) for consideration

Governance

The Forum is chaired through a tripartite arrangement by a representative of state and territory governments, the Australian Government and the convenor of the NGO Coalition.

The Forum is overseen by CAFS which is responsible for decisions requiring action, or a commitment, by jurisdictions.

The Australian Government, through the Department of Social Services (DSS), provides secretariat support to the Forum.

Membership

Each government jurisdiction, including the Commonwealth, nominates a representative to participate in the Forum.

The NGO Coalition has eight representatives from the non-government sector, including academics, practitioners, service providers and advocates for families, children and carers. NGO Coalition membership is agreed by Families Australia as the Coalition Secretariat, in consultation with jurisdictions.

Additionally, the National Children's Commissioner will hold a membership position.

Observer status and guest attendance may be granted to interested parties at the discretion of the Forum. AIHW will hold observer status on the National Forum

Meetings

The National Forum will meet formally up to three times per year as necessary to progress matters requiring collaboration by jurisdictions and civil society organisations.

Agenda items will be agreed by the co-chairs who have discretion to refer issues to be resolved out-of-session as needed.

Agenda papers will be developed by the sponsoring jurisdiction or NGO Coalition member and circulated in advance of a scheduled meeting.

Actions and outcomes from meetings and teleconferences will be circulated in draft form to all jurisdictions and final minutes and outcomes will be circulated for endorsement.

Terms of appointment

The Forum will operate under these Terms of Reference until such time as CAFS or the Forum deems a review is necessary.

Secretariat

The Australian Government, through DSS, will provide Secretariat support. The Secretariat supports and facilitates the business of the Forum.

Other Sub-groups and Workshops

From time to time, the Forum may elect to establish time-limited or subject specific working groups to deliver agreed actions. Nominations will be sought from jurisdictions and through the Secretariat for the NGO Coalition.

Papers

Members may agree at meetings to circulate out-of-session papers for information or endorsement. Members may also agree with the Secretariat to circulate out-of-session papers, especially those requiring jurisdiction input to proposed recommendation(s).

Reporting Requirements

Issues may be escalated to CAFS with the agreement of members, as needed.