

# What Next After the Early Years Summit: Moving Forward

The goal: by 2030 significantly more children in Australia will thrive in their first 1000 days and beyond

The Early Years Summit held in March of this year engaged nearly 500 individuals representing a cross section of early years’ service providers, researchers, policymakers and other interested stakeholders for two-days of presentations, discussions and deliberations about how to ensure that all Australian children have a great start in life. There was furious agreement that we can do far better, especially in terms supporting children in their first and second 1000 days. There was also recognition of the gross inequalities that currently characterise Australian society and a commitment to breaking the cycle of disadvantage through focused investments in building skills and capacities.

Securing population-level improvements for children in the early years will require multi-sector, cross-agency leaders and their organisations not only to respond to a call to action, but also take aligned actions of appropriate scope and scale (Figure 1). More resources are required to be deployed in smart ways with the target of children and their families. Currently, there is a huge range of activity to support children in Australia, much of it exemplary, innovative, and efficacious. However, there is little alignment or commitment to a common purpose, resulting in fragmented, disparate, uneven outcomes. This places Australia in Quadrant 1. We need to be in quadrant 4 – high action, high alignment, to be able to make a real and lasting difference

**Figure 1: COLLECTIVE ALIGNMENT AND ACTION**

<b>Takes actions that contribute to results</b>	<b>1. High action, low alignment</b>	<b>4. High action, high alignment</b>
	Leaders working actively and independently to contribute to shared outcomes, but not reaching out to build relationships that would maximise impact	Leaders with resilient relationships acting on collaborative decisions, implementing shared strategies and being accountable for achieving outcomes
	<b>2. Low action, low alignment</b>	<b>3. Low action, high alignment</b>
	Leaders observing what is going on and not engaging in either relationship building or taking actions that contribute to shared outcomes	Leaders joining with others and fostering relationships, but not using the relationships to leverage contribution to shared outcomes
<b>Works to be in alignment with others</b>		

## INDICATIVE CONCEPTUALISATION OF PROGRESSING THE EARLY YEARS WORK

The table below is based on the work completed at the Summit by all participants.

**Table 1: An Outline of the National Early Years Blueprint**

<p><b>What do we want</b></p>	<p>By 2030 significantly more children in Australia are thriving in their first 1000 days and beyond</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↑</p> <p>Healthy early development (incl. self-efficacy, resilience, life/executive function skills) to support social and economic wellbeing across the life course for ALL children</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↑</p> <p>Responsive caregiving, safe, nurturing environments and strong life management skills to support all children’s healthy development</p>
<p><b>Strategies for achieving goals</b></p>	<p><b>Strategies created for a) investment and b) capability building to improve the Early Years in Australia</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• building necessary individual, family and community capacities and foundations through an ecological frame</li> <li>• reducing sources of stress on families</li> <li>• reducing incidence and intensity of adverse childhood experiences</li> <li>• enhancing environments where all aspects of children’s wellbeing are supported</li> <li>• enhancing families’ social and economic participation &amp; reducing inequities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Blueprint design principles/ criteria</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• collective leadership, shared power, co-designed with community</li> <li>• articulates the public value for citizens, communities and consumers/clients</li> <li>• includes cost/benefit analysis (including opportunity costs; productivity dividends; tertiary costs avoided – see <i>Their Futures Matter</i>) a focus on prevention and early intervention</li> <li>• co-designed and co-led by intended users: supports and promotes self determination of all groups (e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, migrants and refugees, those experiencing entrenched disadvantaged)</li> <li>• includes iconic actions (e.g. National Early Development Scheme or Guarantee)</li> <li>• culturally aware and competent</li> <li>• ambitious, bold while sensible and practical</li> <li>• aspirational, recognising opportunities and constraints, strengths-based</li> <li>• captures passions, aspirations of all sections of Australian population; work across difference, boundaries, sectors, silos</li> <li>• centres on children’s wellbeing and parents’ and community aspirations</li> <li>• uses common, accessible language</li> <li>• identifies a national ‘destination’ while promoting local community initiative</li> <li>• embeds strategic learning and adaptation; flexible and responsive</li> <li>• takes a staged, phased, incremental approach to change including assumption testing</li> <li>• balances universal and targeted investments &amp; interventions (progressive, proportionate universalism/investments)</li> <li>• builds on co-design and co-production of strategy and implementation</li> <li>• articulates with other significant national strategies / frameworks</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• aligns with life-course approach</li> <li>• promotes compatibility with United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and States’ human rights legislation</li> <li>• see and respond to the whole child, their family, and their environment; recognises context (e.g. climate change)</li> <li>• measurement of holistic wellbeing</li> <li>• strengths-based funding model</li> </ul>
<b>What can we do today</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include the following in organisational values/mission statements/pitches/reports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Children are a national priority and therefore need matching investment and political priority</li> <li>○ Child wellbeing is to be taken seriously</li> <li>○ Child rights to be upheld</li> </ul> </li> <li>• articulate the ‘burning platform’ for change (individual and public costs, harms, waste, inequities, anxieties etc.)</li> <li>• give voice to &amp; listen to children and parents</li> <li>• mobilise ‘experts’ and communicate the science about ‘what works’; ensure evidence-based practice</li> <li>• facilitate cross-sectoral networks and civic &amp; community-led activities at any level available to you i.e. local, regional, state, and national levels</li> <li>• engage influencers across diverse social and economic sectors (media, business, tertiary institutions, religious bodies, unions, professional bodies, P&amp;Cs, sport, local govt, social media etc) to advocate for the importance of investing in babies, children and their families</li> <li>• follow, support, endorse public campaigns that are pushing this agenda e.g. Every Child and Minderoo Thrive by Five</li> </ul>

**Table 2: Examples of Proposed Initiatives**

<b>Proposed examples of key national enabling initiatives that can drive national action, provide data and opportunities for de-siloing activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National <b>First 1000/2000 Days Initiative</b> to subsidise universal access to evidence-based universal parenting capacity building information and supports, sustained home-based support, parent coaching and service system navigation.</li> <li>• <b>National Early Learning Guarantee/ Scheme</b> to ensure access to evidence-informed, in-home, community-based or centre-based early learning for parents with infants</li> <li>• Nation-wide scale-up, revamp and rollout of <b>Stronger Places Stronger People program</b> (incorporating Communities for Children, and relevant State and local initiatives)</li> <li>• National <b>Family Well Being Service Initiative</b> to create a network of children and families ‘hubs and spokes’ for easy access to subsidies, services and supports, and to more intensive intervention services (including existing hub initiatives).</li> <li>• 10-year <b>National Partnership Agreement on Thriving Children</b> to revamp roles, responsibilities &amp; relationships (funding, accountabilities, governance, reporting) between Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments to enable key national initiatives</li> <li>• <b>National Council on Thriving Children</b> (with reps from relevant Ministerial Councils, national entities, sectoral networks, and eminent experts from relevant fields) reporting to the National Cabinet, with mandate to drive and oversee implementation, especially strategic initiatives on outcomes, data, knowledge, workforce, professional development, investment, research agenda and communities of practice</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other national agreements and strategies related to <b>health, mental health, housing, disability, violence and child protection, and the Closing the Gap refresh</b> to incorporate common goals and measures related to child wellbeing, development and safety and report to the National Council on Thriving Children</li> <li>• Key <b>national entities</b> (e.g. ABS, AIHW, AIFS, NDIS, ARC and NHMRC) tasked to prioritise work under the National Council on Thriving Children with a facility to produce and update local ‘child and family wellbeing’ community profiles</li> </ul>
<p><b>Proposed examples of key state &amp; local initiatives that can provide more agile action and opportunities for scaling up</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for state, regional and local-level <b>Thriving Children Alliances</b> to support cross-sectoral and place-based strategies and initiatives</li> <li>• <b>Regional Investment Boards</b> established by Cwth-States/Territories to facilitate commissioning, innovation, and place-based initiatives (e.g. an extended role for Primary Health Networks as Regional Health and Wellbeing Networks)</li> <li>• <b>Place-based collective impact initiatives</b> to bring key stakeholders together at a local level to identify and pursue shared goals.</li> <li>• <b>Early Years / Child and Family Wellbeing Centres</b> located on school grounds or hospitals wherever possible to provide services, build the skills and capacities of parents and engage the local community to develop a child-friendly place.</li> <li>• <b>Multisectoral community hubs</b> that act as a safe and welcoming place for families to attend and engage with supports from across health, education, and community services.</li> </ul>

## CONTRIBUTE YOUR THOUGHTS

As a ‘Summiteer’ we encourage you to respond using the Idea Wall on our [Engagement Hub](#) page.

Please chose one or more of the sections from **Table 1** to address to answer one or more of questions 1-4:

1. Does the **What do we want** section clearly capture key insights from the Summit and, if not, what’s missing?
2. Does the **Strategies for achieving goals** section clearly capture key insights from the Summit and, if not, what’s missing?
3. Does the **Blueprint design principles/criteria** section clearly capture key insights from the Summit and, if not, what’s missing?
4. Does the **What can we do today** section clearly capture key insights from the Summit and, if not, what’s missing?

Please refer to **Table 2** that outlines proposed examples of initiatives to answer questions 5 and 6:

5. Please comment on the suggested **Key national enabling initiatives** and identify any missing initiatives
6. Please comment on the suggested **Key state and local enabling initiatives** and identify any missing initiatives

Please provide your own examples of successful programs in question 7:

7. Please provide any examples of specific **successful** state or local initiatives that are demonstrating they can improve the wellbeing of babies, toddlers, and their families.

Consider evaluation and monitoring:

8. How will we know if we are successful – what are potential indicators to measure success?