

A Head Start for Australia: An early years framework

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COMMISSIONERS' FOREWORD

Early child development has become an area of increased focus and emphasis, both in Australia and around the world. A review of evidence and an analysis of both national and international effort support this focus. They confirm the need for a policy framework that supports actions to achieve positive outcomes in health, welfare, education, income distribution and access to infrastructure.

The Queensland and New South Wales Commissioners for Children and Young People, in collaboration with the National Investment for the Early Years (NIFTeY), undertook the development of a draft policy framework to inform our community debate. In developing this framework we aimed to go beyond the usual siloed approach to policy and include underpinning strategies that are essential to improve the wellbeing of Australia's children in a sustained and sustainable effort.

This framework is designed as a tool for government and non-government stakeholders and community members to use when they consider how their sector or community can contribute to children's wellbeing.

We would like to thank project advisory committee members Ms June McLoughlin, Prof Graham Vimpani and Ms Barbara Wellesley, representing the Board of NIFTeY, for their contribution. We would also like to thank the consultants, particularly Dr Mel Miller and Dr Catherine Spooner, and the many people who offered constructive advice and criticism in the development of the framework.

Links to the research and other articles cited in the framework can be found on the websites of the NSW Commission for Children and Young People (www.kids.nsw.gov.au), the Commission for Children and Young People (Qld) (www.childcomm.qld.gov.au) and NIFTeY (www.niftey.cyh.com).

The successful and sustainable implementation of this framework will require the cooperation of all levels of government, the private sector, the not-for-profit sector, industrial organisations, professions and communities. This is no small task, but we hope that by developing and discussing this framework we can assist the process of moving forward to benefit children, families and our whole society.

This is a living document – one that will be refined by advances in knowledge and data collection systems and on the basis of further consultation with children and their carers and with service providers and decision-makers at all levels of government.

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