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1. Consultation Opportunities

1.1 **New Blogs on the Wellbeing of Children and Young People**, Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, April 2011

The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) invites participation in three new blog discussions on the topics 'Social and Emotional Development', 'Collaboration Management' and 'Children and Media':

- Deirdre Croft writes and moderates the Social and Emotional Development blog, a place for people to share their ideas and expertise on how we can better meet the social and emotional developmental needs of children and young people
- Jennifer Pidgeon's blog on Collaboration Management is aimed at anyone who works in collaborations and wants to know more about how to manage projects and relationships, and
- Leanne Drewitt's Children and Media blog is aimed at people who are interested in how children and young people use the media.

<http://www.aracy.org.au/Blog/blog-social-emotional/>

<http://www.aracy.org.au/Blog/blog-collab-mgmt/>

<http://www.aracy.org.au/Blog/blog-children-media/>

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1.2 **Migration Amendment (Detention Reform and Procedural Fairness) Bill 2010**, Inquiry and Report, 24 March 2011

On 24 March 2011, the Senate referred the Migration Amendment (Detention Reform and Procedural Fairness) Bill 2010 (the Bill) to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee for inquiry and report.

The Bill was introduced into the Senate by Senator Hanson-Young on 18 November 2010. The Bill seeks to amend the way in which the *Migration Act 1958* currently operates by, ending offshore processing and the excision policy, ensuring that detention is only used as a last resort, ending indefinite and long-term detention and introducing a system of judicial review of detention beyond 30 days.

Submissions are due by **24 June 2011**. The reporting date is **16 August 2011**.

http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/legcon_ctte/migration_detentionreform_proceduralfairness/index.htm

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1.3 **Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices**, Inquiry and Report, April 2011

On 15 November 2010, the Senate referred the Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices to the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs (the Committee) for inquiry and report.

The matters which have been referred to the Committee include:

- a) the role, if any, of the Commonwealth Government, its policies and practices in contributing to forced adoptions, and
- b) the potential role of the Commonwealth in developing a national framework to assist states and territories to address the consequences for the mothers, their families and children who were subject to forced adoption policies.

The closing date for submissions has not been set and interested parties should regularly check the Committee's website for updates. The report is due for release on **21 November 2011**.

http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/clac_ctte/comm_contrib_former_forced_adoption/index.htm

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1.4 **Family Law Legislation Amendment (Family Violence and Other Measures) Bill 2011**, Inquiry and Report, 25 March 2011

On 25 March 2011, the Senate referred the Family Law Legislation Amendment (Family Violence and Other Measures) Bill 2011 (the Bill) to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee for inquiry and report.

The Bill makes amendments to the *Family Law Act 1975* to prioritise the safety of children in parenting matters where children and families are at risk of violence and abuse. The Bill also makes several technical amendments which seek to correct drafting and minor policy matters, and provide other efficiencies for the courts and litigants.

The report is due for release on **23 June 2011**.

http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/legcon_ctte/family_law_familyviolence/index.htm

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2. Reports, Research Papers, Policy Initiatives, Articles etc

2.1 Child Protection

2.1.1 **Risk assessment in child protection**, Rhys Price-Robertson & Leah Bromfield, National Child Protection Clearinghouse, March 2011

This Resource Sheet from the National Child Protection Clearinghouse outlines different approaches used to assess whether children and young people are at risk of maltreatment. There are two major competing frameworks that are currently implemented widely – actuarial assessment tools and consensus-based assessment tools. This resource sheet describes each type of tool, including strengths and weaknesses, as well as including case study examples of each assessment tool type.

Actuarial assessment tools are usually developed by statistically modelling the factors that increase the risk of re-referral to child protection service. As such they focus on risk-factors for re-referral, not necessarily risk-factors for actual abuse or neglect. These types of assessment tools are best used for prioritising resources, but not necessarily for case planning.

Consensus-based assessment tools allow practitioners to gain more comprehensive information by utilising more items and greater flexibility. These types of assessment tools allow practitioners clinical judgement to play a role. Consensus-based tools are able to be used to form the basis of intervention plans.

This resource sheet also covers some of the arguments against the use of standardised risk assessment instruments, as well as detailing alternative approaches suggested by some practitioners.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/sheets/rs24/rs24.pdf>

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2.1.2 **Child Protection and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children**, Claire Berlyn, Leah Bromfield, & Alister Lamont, National Child Protection Clearinghouse, April 2011

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are over-represented in the child protection system in Australia, and across all jurisdictions. In 2009–10, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people made up 4.6% of all Australian children and young people, but 26.6% of all confirmed reports of abuse or neglect. In Queensland, the rate of Indigenous children and young people aged 0–16 years subject to substantiated abuse or neglect was 6.1 times higher than the rate for non-Indigenous children and young people (25.6 per 1000 and 4.2 per 1000 respectively).

Under-reporting of abuse and neglect, specifically in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is related to:

- mistrust of police, justice system and government agencies in general
- fear that a child may be removed from a community
- denial/silence
- social and cultural pressure not to report abuse
- protection of perpetrator because of high rates of Indigenous deaths in custody
- fear of retaliation
- personal and cultural factors of shame and guilt, and
- geographical isolation.

Among substantiated cases of maltreatment in Indigenous children and young people in 2009–10, neglect was most common (37.5%), followed by emotional abuse (33.7%), physical abuse (20.0%) and sexual abuse (8.8%).

In 2009–10, 32.1% of all children and young people in out-of-home care in Australia were Indigenous. In Queensland, Indigenous children and young people were 8.4 times more likely to be in out-of-home care than non-Indigenous children and young people (38.3 per 1000 and 4.6 per 1000 respectively).

The resource sheet also discusses the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, which states the preferred order of placement for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child removed from home to be:

1. the child's extended family
2. the child's Indigenous community, or
3. other Indigenous people.

Finally, the resource sheet identifies key individual, family and community issues that have been associated with child abuse and neglect in Indigenous communities:

- alcohol and drug use
- family violence
- pornography, and
- overcrowded and inadequate housing.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/sheets/rs10/rs10.pdf>

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2.1.3 **The economic costs of child abuse and neglect**, Leah Bromfield, Prue Holzer & Alister Lamont National Child Protection Clearinghouse, April 2011

This resource sheet provides an overview of child neglect and abuse expenditure by departments responsible for child protection in Australia. It is based on data provided in the Productivity Commission's annual *Report on Government Services* by the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP, 2011).

According to the report, approximately \$2.8 billion was spent on child protection in Australia in 2009-10. Of this, \$1.7 billion (64.9%) was spent on out-of-home care, \$892 million on child protection services, and \$277 million on intensive family support services. Expenditure on out-of-home care and child protection services has increased by 13.2% since 2008-09. NSW had the highest expenditure (\$1.1 billion) followed by Qld (\$625 million), Vic (\$503 million), WA (\$241 million), NT (\$59 million), Tas (\$57 million), SA (\$157 million) and ACT (\$33 million).

The report notes that, in addition to this expenditure, state and territory governments fund programs and services designed to prevent the occurrence of child abuse and neglect and ameliorate the risk factors that contribute. However, the report explains that it is difficult to quantify such expenditure as the range of possible prevention services and programs is extremely broad. They may be large-scale and made available to all families (i.e., primary or universal prevention) or they may be targeted towards children and families considered to be at risk (i.e., secondary prevention programs).

The Australian Government also contributes directly to child abuse prevention primarily through programs funded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). Total expenditure is again, difficult to quantify, however during 2009-10, the department spent \$238.372 million on "Family Support" of which \$81.794 million was spent on "Children and Parenting Services". The report acknowledges that the economic and social costs of child abuse and neglect are substantial and stresses, therefore, that investment in prevention is a critical priority.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/sheets/rs2/rs2.pdf>

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2.1.4 **Transitioning from out of home care to independence**, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs together with the National Framework Implementation Working Group, December 2010

Under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009 – 2020, the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments have committed to improve support for young people leaving out of home care as a priority.

This paper summarises evidence from the literature and highlights some existing good practice examples of support for young people leaving care. The paper describes a vision for the future and identifies and describes the two key actions being taken to improve the effectiveness of the process of transitioning from care to independent living. The key actions are:

- a nationally consistent approach to leaving care plans, and
- a review of the Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA).

http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/families/progserv/Child_Abuse_Prevention/Pages/trans_ind_homecare_discussionpaper.aspx

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2.2 Law and Youth Justice

2.2.1 Promising interventions for reducing Indigenous juvenile offending, Kelly Richards, Lisa Rosevear and Robyn Gilbert, Indigenous Justice Clearinghouse, April 2011

Indigenous young people are over-represented at all stages of the criminal justice system, and their over-representation becomes more pronounced at the most severe end of the system (i.e. in detention). Recent figures show that Indigenous young people are 24 times more likely to be detained than non-Indigenous juveniles.

Measures like diversion and youth justice conferencing are important in reducing the over-representation of Indigenous juveniles in detention and minimising young people's contact with the formal criminal justice system. However, diversionary measures can only have a limited impact; reducing offending is critical to addressing the over-representation of Indigenous young people in the justice system.

This paper reviews the evidence on policies and programs that reduce offending by Indigenous young people. Primary prevention programs, including both situational prevention strategies (where physical environment is manipulated to reduce opportunities for crime) and social prevention strategies (such as those that address poverty or unemployment) are discussed. Secondary prevention programs aimed at those who are considered at high risk of committing crimes, including those who may have already begun offending, are also reviewed.

The paper focuses on programs about which evaluative data have been collected and where relevant, research from comparable jurisdictions, such as New Zealand and Canada, is also discussed.

<http://www.indigenousjustice.gov.au/briefs/brief010.pdf>

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2.2.2 Juvenile Justice in Australia 2008–09, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, April 2011

This report is the latest in a series of reports from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare that presents data on young people under juvenile justice supervision. It includes data on both detention and community-based supervision. This year's report includes, for the first time, detailed information on all community-based orders supervised by juvenile justice agencies, as well as new analyses on the remoteness and socioeconomic status of young people's usual residence. Some of the main findings of this year's report are:

- each year, less than 5% of young people are proceeded against by police, around 2% have a case finalised in a children's court, 0.5% are supervised by a juvenile justice agency and 0.2% are detained
- there were approximately 7,200 young people under juvenile justice supervision across Australia on an average in 2008–09
- in 2008–09, Indigenous young people were almost 14 times as likely to be under community-based supervision as non-Indigenous young people, and 24 times as likely to be detained, and
- in 2008–09, young people living in low socioeconomic areas were around 5 times as likely to be under supervision as young people living in high socioeconomic areas.

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=10737418606&libID=10737418605>

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2.3 Early Years

2.3.1 Our future on the line – keeping the early childhood education and care on track, a state of the sector report, Early Childhood Australia, April 2011

This is the first in a series of sector reports on the implementation status of the national Early Childhood Education and Care reforms.

The Early Childhood and Education and Care reforms will benefit families and care services through a reduced staff to child ratio, improved staffing qualifications and the public rating system for child care providers. Families will be able to find out how their provider rates against other providers and services providers will know how and where they can improve their services to give all children, regardless of their location, access to the best early childhood education and

care.

In this first report, New South Wales and Victoria are currently passing their own state legislation to enact the national law, specifically the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*. The remaining states and territories are yet to pass the national law.

http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/pdf/our_future_on_the_line.pdf

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2.4 Education

2.4.1 Bridging the gap in school achievement through the arts – Summary Report, Brian Caldwell, Jessica Harris, Tanya Vaughan, The Song Room, April 2011

The Song Room (TSR) is a national not for profit organisation that provides free, tailored, long-term music and arts-based programs for children in disadvantaged and high need communities to enhance their educational and developmental outcomes.

TSR commissioned an independent research company (Educational Transformations Pty Ltd) to conduct a study on the impact of TSR programs in government schools in relatively disadvantaged communities in New South Wales on indicators of student performance that have been identified in previous research as related to potential engagement in juvenile crime. Students in Grades five and six were the subjects of the study.

This summary report provides a synopsis of related research, the findings of which helped shape the selection of matters for investigation, an overview of the methodology, illustrative findings, and a discussion of the implications and limitations of the project.

Given that student participation in TSR programs was limited to one hour per week, the researchers did not anticipate that there would be significant differences in outcomes for students involved in the program and those in a matched set of schools that do not participate. However, schools participating in TSR programs were found to outperform those that are not participating on most indicators selected for investigation, including outcomes in NAPLAN and student wellbeing.

The researchers conclude that the implications for policymakers and school leaders are significant: "Schools in similar settings should be encouraged to consider participation in TSR if they are not already engaged or do not have a similar program in the arts".

<http://www.songroom.org.au/images/stories/Bridging%20the%20Gap%20in%20School%20Achievement%20through%20the%20Arts.pdf>

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2.4.2 Diving for pearls: An account of parents' quest for an inclusive education in Queensland, Queensland Parents for people with a Disability Inc., 2011

In 2010, Queensland Parents for People with a Disability Inc. (QPPD) commissioned research to investigate whether parents' experience of inclusive schools reflected the changes in policy and legislation over the past ten years. One hundred and seventy-nine parents of children with a disability were surveyed either on-line or through a phone in and further qualitative information was gathered through three facilitated group discussions with 25 participants.

General findings from the research suggest that parents cannot always feel confident that inclusive policy is being put into practice in all Queensland schools. There are however, schools that are inclusive and places where children can be valued and participating members of their local communities. Just over a third of survey respondents said they were not able to access education on the basis of equal opportunity and their children are not at the school of their choice. Some of the barriers parent identified in relation to enrolling children in their school of choice included:

- negativity at the preferred school
- being directed to a different school
- the need for significant parent input to achieve enrolment in a regular school, and
- a lack of support or expertise available at the preferred school.

Teachers' attitudes, knowledge and skills were seen as fundamental for effective outcomes for children with disability. The report also presents a set of 15 recommendations that address the need to improve the performance of education systems in delivering inclusive policy and legislation.

http://www.qppd.org/downloads/QPPD_Diving%20for%20Pearls_March2011.pdf

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2.5 Health and Wellbeing

2.5.1 Occasional Paper No. 35 Post-diagnosis support for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, their families and carers, FaHCSIA Social Policy and Research Centre, University of New South Wales, 2011

This paper consists of two reports on post-diagnosis support for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The first report focuses on younger children, and the second on older children. The reports are based on extensive literature reviews addressing the experiences of diagnosis, treatment and support for families with children who are diagnosed with ASD. They focus on the impact of ASD on families and on their perceptions of the benefits of the treatment received and support models provided, as well as intervention studies and programs that assist transitions from school. The reports are also based on interviews with parents and ASD service providers in NSW, Qld, Vic and SA.

The paper, focusing on younger children, notes that significant resources are being invested in helping families with children with ASD but that these resources are being invested in an environment where there are long waiting lists for allied health services and the intensive treatment services that many parents want their children to receive. Parents, service providers and clinicians made numerous suggestions for improving support for children with ASD and their families, including: a one-stop shop of federal and state services; increased availability of allied health services; more information to general practitioners (GPs) and baby health centres; the central coordination of waiting lists; and the details of therapists experienced with ASD.

The second paper, focusing on older children, notes that parents expressed difficulty in finding information on services that are particularly important for older children and adolescents, but often difficult for their families to find. They include: mental health services; social skills and social opportunities; educational and vocational services; respite services; and crisis support. The paper makes a number of recommendations for changes to service delivery and support in the areas of: behaviour support; life skills; social skills; access to timely and authoritative information; funding; integrated education and support environments; and respite.

<http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/about/publicationsarticles/research/occasional/Documents/op35/default.htm>

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2.5.2 Translating early childhood research evidence to inform policy and practice, Policy Brief Issue 21, 12 April 2011

This policy brief outlines the complexities involved in selecting interventions for early childhood services. It advocates for a broader method of assessing outcomes of interventions through incorporating practice-based evidence into the understanding of evidence-based practice.

The proposed broader definition incorporates traditional evidence-based practice, 'practice-based' evidence and client characteristics, values and context.

The policy brief concludes that while the use of the best available evidence in the evaluation and selection of an intervention is vital, restricting this to the 'best research evidence' will not always tell services all they need to know in order to choose an intervention. In addition, when equally rigorous due consideration is given to the identification of outcomes, strategies to achieve outcomes, circumstances, values and preferences – in conjunction with the evidence-base of the intervention itself – resulting programs are likely to be more relevant within particular service contexts, and therefore more successful.

http://www.rch.org.au/emplibrary/ccch/Policy_Brief_21_-_Evidence_based_practice_final_web.pdf

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2.6 Participation and Engagement

2.6.1 Communication with young people in a family services setting, Elly Robinson and Robyn Miller, Australian Family Relationships Clearinghouse, April 2011

There has been an increased emphasis on child-inclusive and child-focused practice in family relationship service delivery in recent years. Yet there has been little discussion about how engaging with children may differ according to the age and developmental stage of the child. Engaging young people successfully in a family counselling setting, for example, will often require a skilled use of communication that incorporates an understanding of the intricate nature of adolescent development and how this relates to the issues for the family.

This article looks at some of the issues related to communicating with young people, and practice tips which may help to make the conversation run more smoothly.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/afrc/pubs/newsletter/frq018/frq018-1.html>

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2.6.2 **The benefits of social networking services and Living lab study on intergenerational attitudes towards social networking and cyber safety**, Philippa Collin, Kitty Rahily, Ingrid Richardson, Amanda Third, Cooperative Research Centre for Young People, Technology and Wellbeing, 5 April 2011

These two reports include a literature review of social networking services and the findings from a study where the researchers supported a group of young people as they developed and delivered a cyber safety education workshop for a group of parents with teenage children.

The research findings indicate that young people are better equipped to deal with online risks than adults assumed and that they can be a valuable resource for adults who are concerned about their own children's online safety.

The researchers also found that social networking can have significant benefits such as enhancing a young person's education, supporting personal relationships, providing safe opportunities for exploring identity and increasing a young person's sense of community and belonging.

http://www.inspire.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Collin-et-al_2011_YAW-CRC_The-Benefits-of-Social-Networking-Sites-Literature-Review.pdf
and http://www.inspire.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/FINAL_Living_Lab_Report.pdf

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3. Submissions Prepared by Commission for Children, Young People and Child Guardian

3.1 **Submission to the Review of Disability Standards for Education 2005 Discussion Paper 2010**, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, April 2011

The Commission provided a response to this Discussion Paper, which included recommendations that the Disability Standards for Education and Guidance Notes:

- place a stronger focus on the requirement for education and training institutions to commit to ongoing professional development in inclusive education for all staff
- should identify the importance of establishing and maintaining positive relationships and effective communication between parents and/or carers and educational personnel, and
- be revised to include all child-care providers covered by the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 in the list of education providers bound by the Standards.

<http://www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au/pdf/submissions/CCYPCG-Submission-to-the-review-of-Disability-Standards-for-Education.pdf>

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3.2 **Learn or Earn Discussion Paper**, CREATE Foundation, March 2011

The Commission provided a response to this Discussion Paper, which highlighted:

- the need to increase awareness amongst young people in care of the existing financial supports and government programs such as Youth Connections, and how to access them
- the importance of developing more tailored responses to support young teenage parents and their children, e.g., access to appropriate housing; flexible, affordable child care and education and training options designed for young parents
- the Commission's Community Visitors report that many young people in care continue to identify the need for more support in a number of areas, including:
 - support with planning and decisions
 - support with engaging in further education, training or employment
 - support with obtaining a driver's licence or other transport options
 - support with accessing financial assistance and income support, and
 - support with developing life and self care skills.

<http://www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au/pdf/submissions/S264LearnorEarnDiscussionPaper-CREATE.pdf>

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3.3 Opening address by the Queensland Commissioner for Children and Young People and Child Guardian to the Senate Inquiry Hearing regarding a Commonwealth Commissioner for Children and Young People Bill 2010, Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee, March 2011

On 27 March 2011, the Commissioner represented the Australian Children's Commissioners and Guardians (ACCG) at the Senate Inquiry Hearing regarding the Greens Commonwealth Commissioner for Children and Young People Bill 2010. The Commissioner provided an opening statement and answered questions and answers in relation to the Bill.

The Commissioner indicated that the ACCG sees benefit in a national children's commissioner with a national and international focus on rights-based advocacy for children and young people with a particularly important example being refugee children and young people. However, in establishing this new role, monitoring and advocacy systems that are already working well in states and territories must not be jeopardised or weakened.

Accordingly, it will be critical that:

- the role, functions and powers of a national children's commissioner are more clearly defined
- duplication is avoided as it will create further bureaucracy and divert already scarce resources away from state and territory important oversight roles and mechanisms,
- the relationship a national commission would have with state and territory commissioners and guardians is clarified.

<http://www.ccyprg.qld.gov.au/about/news/2011/april/Commissioner-gives-evidence-to-Senate-Inquiry.html>

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4. Events and Conferences

4.1 Families and Children Together, Early Intervention through Playgroup Conference, conducted by Playgroup Queensland, to be held at Royal on the Park, Brisbane on Friday 5 August 2011

This conference considers ways to build stronger families and communities through promoting discussion and awareness of the importance of early childhood development, health and welfare, early intervention, family support and community funded programs.

<http://www.playgroupaustralia.com.au>

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