

"Every Australian Community is Child Friendly"

- NAPCAN's Vision, 2005

Now and in the future our children's wellbeing underpins and is a key determinant of the wellbeing of our country...

...imagine an Australia in which all communities are child friendly and take inspired and courageous actions to prevent abuse and neglect of children by taking responsibility for every child's wellbeing. This is the multi-generational vision in which NAPCAN plays a leading part.

Strategic Background

NAPCAN is establishing itself as a voice and support for Child Friendly Communities; the wellbeing of children; and the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

Every NAPCAN initiative, project and program is aimed to inspire, enable and support communities taking action to become child friendly.

The key outcomes NAPCAN aims to deliver on are:

- promote the key attributes of Child Friendly Communities that increase protective factors and reduce risk factors associated with child abuse and neglect;
- increase the number of Child Friendly Communities; and,
- improve the quality of the actions taken by Child Friendly Communities.

NAPCAN believes that over the longer term these outcomes will:

- generate continuous improvements in the wellbeing of children; and,
- reduce abuse and neglect of children in Australia.

NAPCAN's community approach challenges the commonly held view that parents carry the sole responsibility for children's safety and wellbeing. **To date successful solutions to the complex and endemic social problem of child abuse and neglect have only been found by working in a sustained way in partnership with communities.**

We call these 'Child Friendly Communities'.

To be able to work 'in a sustained way in partnership with communities' NAPCAN asks communities to form a Children's Community Action Team (C-CAT). C-CATs will facilitate child friendly initiatives with NAPCAN's support. C-CAT's may work in one community (such as a neighbourhood or workplace), or across many (such as a geographic region).

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Qualities of Child Friendly Communities

A Child Friendly Community provides children with opportunities for optimal growth and development: socially, emotionally, culturally and spiritually.

It embodies a life for children, free from harmful or abusive behaviours, systems and services. Families, parents and carers are supported within their community and readily access help when experiencing difficulties. Children are valued, respected and actively included in the community.

When NAPCAN talks about "community" it is talking about the people in our "every day" lives. This wide-ranging interpretation and understanding of "community" includes neighbourhoods, sporting clubs, businesses and work places, cultural groups, religious groups, social groups, friends, professional groups, internet groups and interest groups, are some of the "communities" that influence the wellbeing of children. There are many more.

The qualities of Child Friendly Communities include:

- services and social networks to support families;
- involvement and respect of children;
- modeling appropriate parenting behaviour; and
- take pride in people and culture.

Communities with these qualities provide a web of support across all aspects of a child's life – enhancing their development, wellbeing and resilience against harm.

NAPCAN believes the most effective way to become a Child Friendly Community is to form a C-CAT to facilitate child friendly initiatives with the community.

Quality initiatives taken by Child Friendly Communities will result in:

- increased awareness of the importance of children and the collective responsibility of communities to nurture the development of children;
- increased community involvement in the development and provision of flexible, responsive services for families and children at the local level;
- effective links and coordination among services for families within communities;
- development of informal support networks, cultural diversity, and social inclusion for all families;
- built and natural environments that support children's wellbeing (such as safe neighbourhoods, green spaces and facilities that encourage active play, family activities, and learning, and access to key resources like libraries, affordable transport and essential services); and,
- family friendly work places that assist parents achieve a balance between work and family commitments.

The wellbeing and rights of children inform NAPCAN's actions. As they are characteristic of a Child Friendly Community, delivering on them increases the quality and quantity of children's access to and experience of these rights.

It is inherent that children's wellbeing and rights underpin every Child Friendly Community.

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Children's Wellbeing – Underpinning Every Child Friendly Community

Children's wellbeing is at the centre of everything NAPCAN does, and every Child Friendly Community.

Every community can strive to be a community where children:

Play a Part - Being included in decisions, freedom to join with others, freedom to express themselves and freedom to receive information

- Participate in decisions that affect them
- Have the ability to join with others
- Freedom to express themselves and receive information

Reach their Potential - The right to the things needed to develop as best as they can, including education, family, culture and identity

- Quality education and family life
- Cultural freedom
- The Opportunity to fulfill their identity

Live Well - The right to survival includes all the basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, health, and an appropriate standard of living.

- Quality food, clothing, shelter and health
- Quality standard of living

Are Free from Harm - Children and young people are to be protected from abuse, neglect, economic exploitation, torture, abduction, and prostitution.

A Child Friendly Community will contribute to improvements in the following factors related to child development, health and wellbeing developed from the National Agenda for Early Childhood and Pathways to Prevention, Development and Early Intervention Approaches to Crime in Australia, National Anti-Crime Strategy:

- community capacity to respond to family and children's issues;
- resilience factors that provide children, families and communities with the ability to overcome adversity;
- social connectedness and participation of children and families in community life and community groups;
- existence of supportive social relationships and networks;
- respect for cultural diversity;
- available and accessible services and supports which respond effectively to local needs of families with children;
- early identification of and intervention for families and children at risk of poor outcomes;
- community safety; and,
- children develop a strong cultural identity.

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Summary

Building upon NAPCAN's relationships with child focused professionals, entire communities are now being called upon to take responsibility for the wellbeing of children.

NAPCAN sees these communities becoming 'Child Friendly Communities'.

NAPCAN wishes to work with C-CATs to facilitate and coordinate child friendly initiatives being undertaken in the community.

NAPCAN is looking for specific community actions and behaviours that benefit children as an indicator of our mutual success.

NAPCAN calls these community actions and initiatives 'Child Friendly Initiatives'.

Key strategic questions guide this process:

1. What are the child friendly qualities of your community?
2. What child friendly initiatives are being undertaken in your community?
3. Who from your community is involved?
4. What difference is the child friendly initiative making for children?

And this fourth strategic question often provides powerful insight and inspiration for the whole community involved:

5. What difference is the child friendly initiative making for the wider community?