

Children Communities Connections 2010 Conference Communiqué

Background

The Communities Children Connections conference was held in Adelaide 25-26 November 2010 under the theme of developing effective integrated place-based support for children and their families. More than 320 delegates attended the conference representing community services, education, health, commonwealth, state and local government and the non-government sector. Delegates holding practice, policy and research positions across the various family support sectors and disciplines attended from all states and territories of Australia.

The closing session of the conference comprised a facilitated discussion with an expert panel and conference delegates. Through this process and prior input from practitioners, researchers and policy makers, key themes were identified. Emerging issues that have implications for effective policy and practice at the systemic level, are presented in this Conference Communiqué

Key Themes

In view of increasing evidence of the cost effectiveness and improved outcomes resulting from supporting vulnerable families and the significant gains made through the use of a community driven, collaborative and whole of community approaches, Children Communities Connections 2010 conference participants:

- Acknowledge the significant gains that have resulted from developing and implementing the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children, the Early Years Learning Framework and a number of other related policy documents.
- Ask that the Commonwealth and State governments work in ways that will support rather than inadvertently undermine effective implementation of emerging early childhood integrated models of service delivery.
- In view of the National Compact which recognises the strength of the Third Sector, ask that government representatives work collaboratively and in a consultative manner with NGOs as partners.
- Ask that prevention be kept high on the service delivery agenda, particularly in the early years with the best interests of the child at the centre and a community development focus as an imperative.
- Note that in order to deliver significant outcomes, child and family centres and related holistic models of service delivery require significant levels of investment and resourcing to support multi-disciplinary practice, and staff recruitment and retention, including pay and conditions and workforce development.
- Urge state and commonwealth governments to consider structural realignment that will better reflect and model respectful behaviours and principles of service delivery in relation to the need for integration of child, school and family services and implementation of sustainable and timely contractual funding arrangements.
- Acknowledge and seek to add value to the role local government can play in creating capable communities through provision of services and the creation of spaces and places that facilitate community connections.
- Recognise that the adoption of child-friendly policies can promote the active participation of children as young citizens within their communities, including within statutory structures such as the family court.
- Consider the impact of competitive tendering on partnerships between competing organisations and pursue the development of alternative models.
- Support the implementation of policies that prioritise children's best interests and safety in cases involving domestic violence.
- Support the adoption of father inclusive practice guidelines.
- Support the improvement of culturally competent practice and ensure the voices of families and children are heard loud and clear.