



Australian Centre for Child Protection

Strategic Framework 2022-2027

TWENTY YEARS AND BEYOND



University of
South Australia

Australian
Centre for
Child Protection

Acknowledgment

We respectfully acknowledge the Kurna and Whadjuk Noongar Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their Elders past and present, who are the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners of the lands that are now home to the Australian Centre for Child Protection's offices in Adelaide and Perth. We are honoured to recognise our connection to the Kurna and Whadjuk Noongar lands, and their history, culture and spirituality through these locations, and we strive to ensure that we operate in a manner which respects their Elders and ancestors. We also acknowledge the other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People of lands across Australia where we conduct business, their Elders, ancestors, cultures and heritage.

Terminology

As a national centre working across Australia, the Australian Centre for Child Protection uses the terms Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander when referring to traditional custodians across Australia.

When working in a single jurisdiction, the Australian Centre for Child Protection uses the preferred terminology within that jurisdiction.

When working locally, the Australian Centre for Child Protection uses the name of the traditional language group who are the custodians of the land, for example Kurna in Adelaide and Whadjuk Noongar in Perth.

The Australian Centre for Child Protection (ACCP) is dedicated to developing practical outcomes that benefit front-line staff, families and communities and which truly help children and young people.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR CHILD PROTECTION'S STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2022-2027

The past 20 years has seen significant growth and change in our understanding of how to effectively prevent, respond and treat the impacts of child abuse and neglect. But for all the positive changes in our systems and understanding, there is still a long road to travel with significant challenges ahead if we are to achieve the goal of an effective and fit for purpose system of services and supports to prevent, respond to and treat the impacts of abuse and neglect.

Established as a national centre by the Commonwealth in 2004 to support the generation of new knowledge and bridging the gap between what we know and what we do in preventing and responding to abuse and neglect, the Australian Centre for Child Protection (ACCP) has also grown and changed over the past two decades. In 2022, the ACCP celebrated its 18th birthday. As in the life of a child, turning eighteen is a significant milestone for the ACCP. As we launch our new strategic framework, it is important to reflect on and acknowledge the enormous contribution and work of many people who have helped the Centre be in the position it is today.

In turning eighteen, we reflect with pride on our achievement of a sustained, national footprint of projects, a Head Office in South Australia, a Branch Office in Western Australia and staff located around the country. Our large team comprises of a diverse range of knowledge and expertise with a combination of research, policy and practice backgrounds, and from diverse disciplines who draw upon a range of methodological approaches from analysis of big data to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led co-design and everything in between. In addition to our longstanding research activities, the ACCP now also includes a team of clinical specialists supporting the development and delivery of high quality practice-oriented workforce development offerings and we support the development of policy and practice solutions and resources.

As part of the process for developing our strategic framework, we have engaged a range of important stakeholders to seek diverse voice and input into the planning process. The ACCP staff, ACCP Board members, University leaders, and our sector have all provided valuable insights, which have helped to shape and refine our future focus. We appreciate everyone's generosity in this process.

The ACCP's strategic framework 2022-2027 confirms the ACCP's priorities, ambitions and commitments in taking on the critical challenges impacting the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable children and families. We have aligned our priorities to the challenges and needs of the sector with reference to the following key national strategies – *National Framework for Protection Australia's Children, National Strategy for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse, Closing the Gap, & National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children.*

Through our research, we know the majority of families reported to child protection have multiple and complex needs with domestic violence, unmanaged mental illness, substance addiction and housing instability/homelessness as key drivers of children's experience of abuse and neglect. Complex family structures with large numbers of children are common and each individual family member is likely to present with multiple therapeutic needs specific to life stage.

Chronic repeat involvement with child protection and with other agencies and services are the norm with many families experiencing the ongoing impacts of intergenerational trauma. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families continue to experience the impacts of colonisation, systemic racism and forced removals and are over-represented in all aspects of child and family welfare systems. As a sector, we are grappling with how to decolonise research, policy and practice in child protection. However, the systems, services and people that comprise our sector continue to struggle to cope with the size and complexity of the problems before us. Similarly, children and adults who have experienced abuse and neglect continue to struggle to access services and supports to help them to heal and thrive.

What our research at the ACCP has also made increasingly clear is that our policies and systems currently in place continue to respond to these challenges with outdated assumptions for child protection systems reform. It is important to note, these are challenges shared nationally and internationally. Thus, new approaches are urgently needed to prevent and respond to child abuse and neglect. Since our inception, we have worked to identify and respond to these challenges. As the ACCP enters into its second decade, we are committed to working in partnership to drive and support the development and implementation of genuine solutions to address these challenges.

"Aboriginal Australia represents the oldest recorded histories and cultures known to the world, however colonial histories do not acknowledge this fact. Instead Aboriginal Peoples have been ignored and the terra nullius myth has had a devastating impact. It is time to improve engagement with First Nations, and to redress past injustices; to decolonise." (UniSA, Yurirka: Proppa Engagement with Aboriginal Peoples). This Strategic Framework includes explicit strategies and commitments to centre Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' knowledge and leadership as core to the ACCP and to achieving our vision that children thrive in safe and supportive families and communities. It recognises that the ACCP needs to better embed cultural governance into our core operations and that this is foundational to providing a culturally sensitive and respectful environment for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, students and partners, and to our aspirations for the growth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led research and projects.

Our new strategic framework demonstrates our maturity as the leading national Centre for preventing and responding to child abuse and neglect. We will bring this maturity to bear as we continue to partner with the sector to tackle the contemporary priorities and challenges. We are strong, we are energised and we are excited to continue to grow and work with our sector in partnership to deliver excellence and impact for children. While we are proud of our history, we acknowledge there are many challenges ahead in developing new and much needed approaches and solutions. However, we believe our strategic framework puts the ACCP in a leading position to help drive the knowledge and transformation needed. We look forward to the next five years and beyond.

Best Leah

Professor Leah Bromfield
Chair of Child Protection and Director, Australian Centre for Child Protection



ACCP Strategic Framework 2022-2027

Preparing for Twenty Years and Beyond

OUR VISION

Children thrive in safe and supportive families and communities.

OUR MISSION

Improving the lives of vulnerable children by creating and applying knowledge to shape a better future.

OUR VALUES

Excellence

Integrity

Collaboration

Decolonising

Impact

OUR COLLECTIVE PURPOSE

Our staff and students
Enable each staff member and student to achieve and contribute their full potential in a supportive environment.

Our Sector
Lead and work in partnership to drive new and positive change that supports systems, services and the people within them to improve the lives of vulnerable children.

Families and communities
Design and embed responses that support families and communities to be safe and strong with child centred responses that enable vulnerable children to thrive.

Children and young people
Are at the heart of what we do. ACCP hold their lived experience as central to assessing our outcomes and provide opportunities for children's voice and participation.

Active efforts towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander **Self-determination** are part of our collective purpose in all our work

OUR CORE OPERATIONAL AREAS

ACCP has three core functional areas of operation through which it delivers its vision

1. Research and dissemination

2. Workforce capacity building

3. Policy and practice solutions

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. **Generate and disseminate** new evidence, knowledge and insights aligned to the key challenges and strategic priorities of the sector and which drives solutions.

2. **Lead and support** workforce capacity building, policy and practice solutions that are evidence-informed and meet the needs of vulnerable children and families.

3. **Embedded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural knowledge guides** ACCP governance, approaches and projects.

4. **Position and grow awareness** of the ACCP as the nationally leading centre for preventing and responding to child abuse and neglect.

5. **Continue to grow and sustain** the stability and longevity of the ACCP through fit for purpose financial and staffing models.

OUR HISTORY

In 2004, the now Commonwealth Department for Education provided a 10-year grant to establish the Australian Centre for Child Protection. The grant recognised the need for a national centre to generate new knowledge and help bridge the gap between 'what we know and what we do' in preventing and responding to child abuse and neglect. It also recognised that the field of child protection and child abuse and neglect remains a relatively new area of science. The grant established the nationally focussed Australian Centre for Child Protection (ACCP) and the Chair of Child Protection at the University of South Australia.

In 2013, at the close of the 10-year establishment grant and following a successful decade of operation, the Commonwealth Government with the University of South Australia created the ACCP Endowment Fund. At this time ACCP underwent a business redesign process to support its transition to a predominantly project funded Centre. The Endowment Fund aimed to support the continuity of the ACCP as the nationally focussed centre dedicated to supporting and enhancing prevention and response to child abuse and neglect.

The Endowment Fund represents a perpetual commitment from the Commonwealth Government and UniSA to maintain the Australian Centre for Child Protection, with the Endowment Fund specifying that the scope of the ACCP was to contribute to preventing and responding to child abuse and neglect through:

- Maintaining and disseminating a program of research that will expand the knowledge base
- Assisting in preparing graduates and undergraduates, and growing the capacity of practitioners
- Enhancing research capacity through the development of high calibre researchers
- Offering high quality research advice to inform policy and practice
- Working collaboratively across organisations and disciplines
- Promoting research and scholarship
- Continuing to endeavour to attract income to sustain the role and activities of the ACCP

At the launch of the ACCP Strategic Framework for 2022-2027 *Twenty Years and Beyond*, the ACCP has demonstrated its maturity and continued relevance as the largest dedicated centre for preventing and responding to child abuse and neglect in Australia with sustained national and international partnerships. The ACCP has and continues to play a pivotal role in leading and supporting relevant national strategic initiatives and addressing key challenges for the sector.

ACCP within the University of South Australia

ACCP is recognised as one of the University of South Australia's (UniSA) leading research centres. The mission and values of the ACCP are directly aligned to those of UniSA; Australia's University of Enterprise with research that is inspired by global challenges and opportunities, delivers social benefits, and which instils professional skills and knowledge through evidence-informed teaching.

ACCP is situated within the UniSA Justice & Society Academic Unit, the only Australian University academic unit that combines Psychology, Social Work, Sociology, Law, Linguistics and Aboriginal Studies. The disciplinary alignment between UniSA Justice & Society and the multiple disciplines and sectors responding to child abuse and neglect is a strong University enabler of ACCP as a multi-disciplinary centre.

Firmly embedded within UniSA and the Justice & Society Academic Unit, ACCP contributes to the combination of research excellence, collaborative approaches and real-world applicability and impact that are hallmarks to UniSA's success as one of Australia's top young Universities.

As a University supported Centre, the ACCP contributes to the goals and aspirations outlined in Enterprise 25, UniSA's Strategic Plan. As an important part of UniSA's Justice & Society Academic Unit, ACCP also supports the attainment of the Academic Unit strategic and work plan.

ACCP also has explicit actions within UniSA's Justice and Society Reconciliation Action Plan and is guided by the UniSA Aboriginal research strategy and the Yurirka Aboriginal engagement protocols. ACCP supports UniSA's commitment to improving the diversity of our people across our University.

OUR VISION

Our vision is that **children thrive in safe and supportive families and communities.**

We aim to achieve the demonstrable translation of our work into systems design, policy and practice that will better prevent and respond to abuse and neglect over the lifespan and across generations.

Our vision orients us to measure our success in demonstrable change for children, their families and communities and provides the guiding purpose to the work we do.

OUR MISSION

With a focus on preventing and responding to abuse and neglect over the lifespan and across generations, our mission is to **improve the lives of vulnerable children by creating and applying knowledge to shape a better future.**

We apply a solution focused and partnered approach to achieving our mission, that respects diverse knowledge and experiences through our research and dissemination, workforce capacity building, and policy and practice solutions.

This mission statement is more than a motto, it is an action and the ACCP's guiding philosophy. This statement informs our view and intent and is at the heart of the work we do. It underpins every element of our strategic framework and in continuing to embed and live this mission, in partnership with our values, we find purpose as a Centre to ultimately realise our vision.



OUR VALUES

Excellence

We strive for **excellence** across our programs of work and provide opportunities to do the same for all of our team and those with whom we work with. Excellence is important to us, because we wholeheartedly believe that is what children, families and front-line practitioners require and expect of us.. We are striving to build a culture of excellence that is embedded in every staff member and each individual student and extends throughout our work with the entire sector.

Integrity

We act with **integrity**, knowing the sector needs our strong truth telling paired with our genuine understanding to help drive both the necessary change and the mobilisation for this change. We recognise the importance of our partners' trust in us and for us to be diligent and responsible. We also recognise the high standards of ethics and care required when working in a field that responds to such significant harm. Part of our integrity is recognising our responsibility to support and maintain the wellbeing of our people and partners and for this care to be a central priority in how we work.

Collaboration

Collaboration is central to everything we do at the ACCP and to how we work. From collaborative and supportive ways of working within our team that values their knowledge and experience to partnering across the sector to deliver change, to how we engage with and are informed by lived experience - collaborative relationships are a fundamental part of the ACCP. We value each and every collaborative relationship - within our team and externally, and what they bring to the ACCP and our work.

Decolonising

We recognise decolonisation is a responsibility that is shared by everyone. **Decolonising** means taking action as individuals and as a Centre to challenge continuing colonising structures, beliefs and practices that obscure the true history of colonisation, oppress, devalue and stigmatise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, failing to acknowledge the richness and benefits that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and knowledges provide; and the perpetuation of inequity. Decolonising practices centre Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, ways of knowing, working and being.

Impact

As a mission driven and applied Centre, the potential real-world **impact** of our work is critical to what we do and how we do it. As an enabler and facilitator of improved systems, services and practice (without direct accountability for policy or practice). The ACCP recognises the pivotal role of a partnered approach to our work in achieving real-world impact.

OUR COLLECTIVE PURPOSE

OUR CORE OPERATIONAL AREAS

Our staff, our sector, families and communities, and vulnerable children and young people are at the heart of everything we do. Our purpose is to deliver for each of them.

- **Our staff and students**, who we encourage to reach their full potential in a safe, outcomes oriented environment, supported by expert and nurturing leaders. We recognise the emotional labour involved in our work and take a proactive approach that prioritises staff and student wellbeing
- **Our sector**, who we work in partnership with to develop new solutions and approaches and drive change to policy and practice aligned with our vision to improve the lives of vulnerable children.
- **Families and communities**, who are directly affected by changes to policy and practice as a consequence of the work that we do. We are committed to responses that support families and communities to be safe and strong, child centred and support vulnerable children to thrive.
- **Children and young people** are at the heart of all that we do. In determining our priorities, projects and key focus areas we are guided by the lived experience of children and how we can make a positive difference. ACCP will provide opportunities for children to be heard and to inform the development of responses that affect them.
- **Self-determination** is both a right and a necessity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to achieve economic, social and cultural equity. ACCP recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples hold the knowledge and expertise about what is best for themselves, their families and communities. Upholding the right to self determination is a common aspect of how we achieve our purpose in relation to our staff & students, our sector, families and communities, and children and young people.

1. Research and dissemination - supporting research excellence in the field by undertaking research and dissemination, while supporting and developing existing and future researchers to specialise in preventing and responding to child abuse and neglect.

2. Workforce capacity building - supporting the development of new knowledge and practice skills to undergraduates, graduates and existing practitioners through effective models which are innovative, engaging and accessible.

3. Policy and practice solutions - supporting the development and implementation of fit for purpose policy and practice solutions through consultation and collaboration - working with or on behalf of our partners.

The ACCP's core operational areas are enhanced by a professional staff team with business and contract management, administration, finance, human resources and communications expertise.

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Our strategic priorities are intrinsically linked to our collective purpose, ensuring we are delivering clear, measurable outcomes for our team, the sector, families and communities, and ultimately vulnerable children and young people. They reach towards our vision, while maintaining roots in our mission and values.

As a whole, these priorities provide clear evidence of the strong foundation the ACCP has built over the last 18 years. They inform our strategic direction and help us to identify areas of focus for our future.

In addition, they are a reflection not just where the ACCP is now, but show our path for the next five years, while still allowing for further growth and responsiveness.

Our Strategic Framework will be delivered through a series of annually reviewed workplans. We believe this will create stability combined with the agility to be relevant, as well as to leverage the opportunities and emerging needs in the sector.

One of the ACCP's key understandings is that reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in child protection systems is a critical and urgent strategic priority, which is cross-cutting. Over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is a direct impact of colonisation. Decolonising practices and upholding the right to self-determination are roles and responsibilities that belong to us all.

The ACCP recognises that the most effective solutions to address over-representation will be those which have been culturally led and locally governed. The ACCP values cultural knowledge and recognises the benefits Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives can bring to improving the outcomes of all children, families and communities.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

Generate and disseminate new knowledge and insights to drive solutions

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

Lead and support workforce capacity building, policy and practice solutions

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural knowledge to guide the ACCP

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4

Position and grow awareness of the ACCP

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5

Continue to grow and sustain ACCP stability and longevity

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

Generate and disseminate new knowledge and insights to drive solutions

Build on our strong research foundation

We will build on the Centre's strong research foundations developed across the past 18 years, nurturing what makes ACCP partnered research so unique and beneficial.

Our commitments:

Sustain and grow a high performing research program in which our research capabilities are prioritised towards leading research that supports filling evidence gaps and creating new solutions for key challenges, particularly those identified in relevant national plans.¹

Ensure a supportive research environment for every ACCP research student and staff member that will provide them opportunities to achieve and grow in line with their career aspirations and ACCP mission and values.

Maintain and expand our research program that works with Big Data as an effective and efficient use of existing resources for growing the evidence base.

Develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander program of research which is culturally led and governed, and which recognises and values cultural knowledge.

Embed lived experience, including the voice of children and young people into our projects.

Disseminate our research achievements and outcomes as a critical component of our work. ACCP is committed to sharing our research outcomes through a variety of mediums that enhance the accessibility and impact of our research among academic and non-academic research users.

1. Relevant national plans include:

- National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031,
- National Strategy for Preventing and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse,
- Closing the Gap
- National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

Lead and support workforce capacity building, policy and practice solutions

Lead sector development

We will help to lead and support policy and practice nationally and across jurisdictions through our leading workforce capacity building initiatives, specialist consultancy and expert advisory services.

Our commitments:

Grow & Sustain ACCP's workforce capacity building that is high quality, accessible and focussed on priority knowledge and practice skills gaps.

Innovate in our approach to workforce capacity building to incorporate new knowledge and approaches in teaching and learning, and strategies to maximise accessibility.

Align the Centre's consultancy and advisory services to respond to priority sector needs with potential for impact, and which preferences outcomes that can be freely shared.

Partner with and walk alongside our sector to develop and implement policy and practice tools, resources and new solutions which are evidence informed and fit for purpose, drawing upon a diversity of knowledge and experience.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural knowledge to guide the ACCP

Ensuring the ACCP works better

We will embed the cultural knowledge and expertise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples into the governance and operations of the ACCP.

Our commitments:

Implement and sustain governance structures that embed the leadership and guidance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the work and strategic directions of the ACCP.

Create a culturally sensitive and respectful environment that values Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and ways of knowing and doing as central to improving the lives of all children, and which recognises that cultural sensitivity and respect requires recognition and a commitment to continuous humility and learning.

Continuous improvement to enable the ACCP to work better for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4 Position and grow awareness of the ACCP

Leading the sector

We will continue to position the ACCP as the nationally leading centre for preventing and responding to child abuse and neglect.

Our commitments:

Remain at the forefront of child protection research and translation, building on our track record of partnered excellence across all our operational areas.

Communicate the ACCP's team, expertise, work and achievements, including the ongoing dissemination of outcomes, new knowledge, and policy and practice resources.

Build our networks and partnerships across jurisdictions, to be the partner of choice to walk alongside the sector developing, testing and embedding new solutions to contemporary challenges.

Ensure our offering is clear and relevant, identifying and keeping abreast of the changing needs of the sectors.

Maximise the awareness of opportunities to engage with the breadth of skills and expertise of ACCP's team of leading specialists.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5

Continue to grow and sustain ACCP stability and longevity

A fit for purpose financial and staffing model

We will continue to be focused on the future growth and sustainability of the ACCP in a supportive environment that enables staff to achieve and grow.

Our commitments:

Partner with our Academic Unit and University to embed sustainable financial models that integrate and support the operations of the ACCP.

Grow the diversity and sustainability of the ACCP with existing and new partners.

Support staff to achieve, excel and grow while maintaining their wellbeing. Continue to improve equity, opportunity and security for ACCP's project funded staff.

ACCIP



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**Improving the lives
of vulnerable children.**

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