



# Safe and well:

Supporting families, protecting children

2022 Annual Report



Government  
of South Australia



Readers are asked to note that references in this report to Aboriginal children, families and communities refer to people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

### **Support services**

The work of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the South Australian Government's reporting may be distressing to some people.

If at any time you feel that you would like to speak with someone, there are many services and support groups that can help. Some options for advice and support include:

- **Lifeline** on 13 11 14
- **13YARN** on 13 92 76
- **1800 Respect** on 1800 737 732
- **National Redress Information Line** on 1800 737 377

Department for Child Protection  
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Adelaide, SA 5000

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## Foreword

I feel very privileged to be the Minister for Child Protection. This annual report describes our continued efforts across government to examine where we can do better and drive reforms that improve outcomes for children, young people, families and carers. While it has been a challenging year, the reform that has been progressed over the past 12 months demonstrates the South Australian Government's commitment to a child protection system that is responsive, accountable and focused on keeping children and young people at the centre of everything we do.

We are working collectively across agencies and with our community partners to continue building on best practice across all parts of the system. We are focusing our efforts on strengthening families to keep their children safe and cared for, intervening early when children and young people are at risk and supporting children and young people in care and leaving care to thrive, so that we can break the cycle of intergenerational abuse and neglect.

There is more to do. Currently, 1 in 3 South Australian children and young people come to the attention of our child protection system. This highlights the extent to which many families in our community are needing extra support to care for their children in a safe, healthy and positive way. Mental health, domestic and family violence and alcohol and other drugs are often key factors. We know a connected, whole of community response is required to respond to the full complexity of issues that families experience.

Every day in child protection, we have enormous opportunities to deliver meaningful change for children and families. I am really pleased to be working closely with the federal government through *Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children* on joined-up efforts to prevent children and young people entering the child protection system.

Our collective measures in response to Closing the Gap will see us moving forward in genuine partnership with Aboriginal people to deliver generational transformational change in the child protection system. Connection with culture is fundamental to this. We are committed to the self-determination of Aboriginal families and communities and empowering Aboriginal communities to guide and deliver services to Aboriginal children and young people.

Our state's child protection system fulfils an incredibly important role for our community. It is critical that we learn and examine where the system can continue to be improved. We welcome the findings from this year's reviews as an opportunity to further increase our understanding of how we can build a stronger child protection system.

As we build a sustainable system for the future, we will actively listen to the voices of children, young people, families and carers. We recently began consulting on how the legislative framework for the child protection system – the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* – can empower us to best support and protect children and young people.

I look forward to a genuine, shared exploration of the collective approach we can take so South Australia's children and young people grow up feeling safe, loved and cared for.

**The Hon Katrine Hildyard MP**  
Minister for Child Protection



# Introduction

This report is the third combined annual report on the actions being taken by the state government in response to two significant Royal Commissions: the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission (CPSRC) and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (RCIRCSA).

It outlines progress in implementing the combined total of 516 recommendations across these Royal Commissions as well as progress on the across government child protection reform agenda, as set out in *Safe and well: Supporting families, protecting children*, released in December 2019. We remain committed to continuing to reform child protection to improve our approach to keeping children safe and breaking the intergenerational cycle of abuse and neglect.

This Safe and well 2022 Annual Report provides an account of the key accomplishments in child protection reform in the 2021-22 financial year. It reflects the work that has been done to strengthen families, protect children and young people and support them in care and on leaving care to thrive and reach their full potential. This work has occurred across the state government, led by the Department for Child Protection together with:

- Department of Human Services
- Department for Health and Wellbeing
- Department for Education
- South Australian Housing Authority
- South Australia Police
- Attorney-General's Department
- Department of the Premier and Cabinet
- Department of Treasury and Finance.

## Summary of progress on recommendations

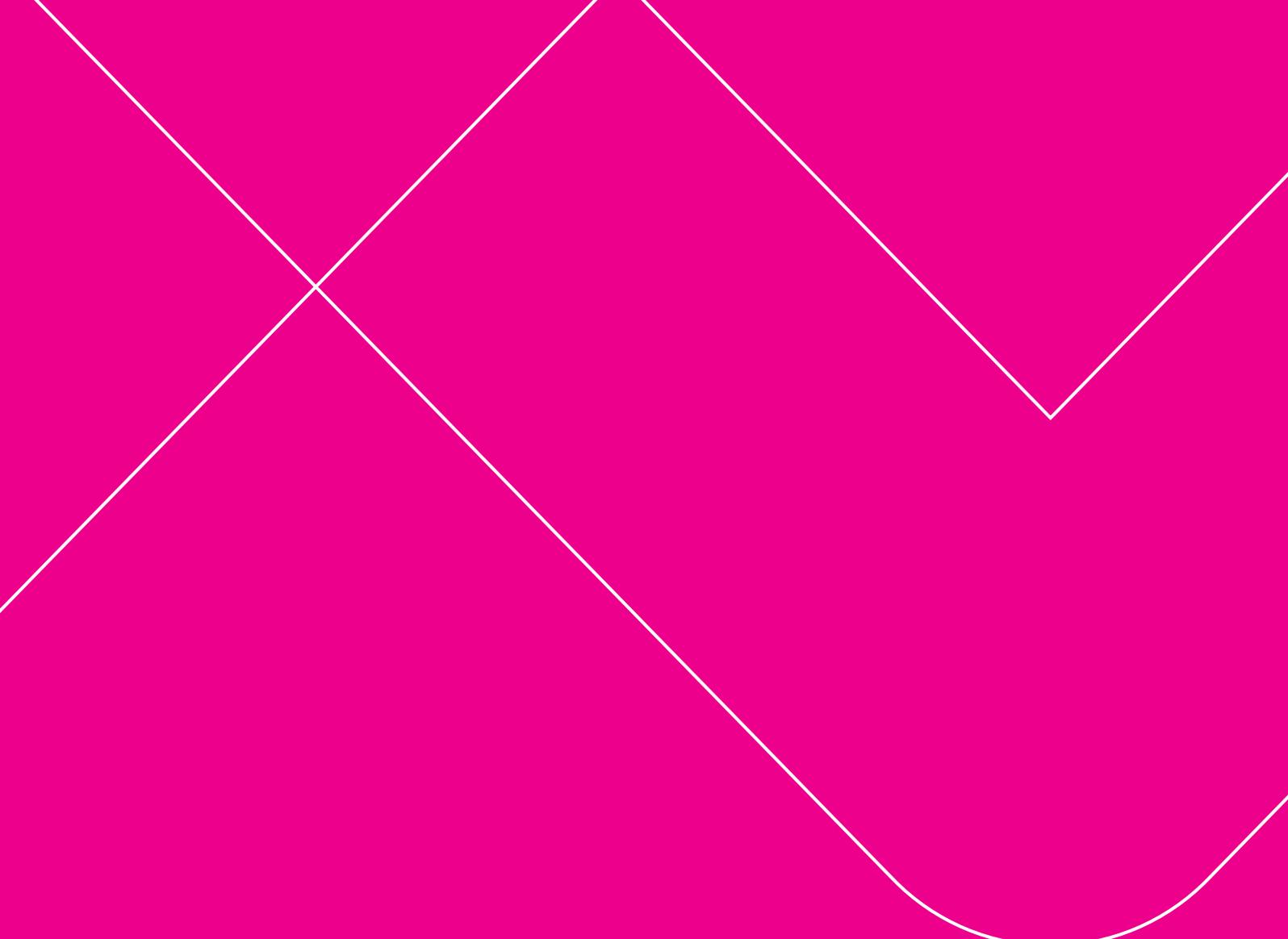
In 2021-22, an additional 16 recommendations have been completed from the CPSRC, and an additional 36 have been completed from the RCIRCSA.

87 recommendations are currently being progressed by the state government<sup>^</sup>. For a full account of the status and progress of each recommendation, see Appendix 1.

Status	CPSRC	RCIRCSA	Total
Complete	238	179	417
Implementing	18	35	53
Planning	0	16	16
For further consideration	0	17	17
Split*	0	6	6
Not accepted	4	3	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>516</b>

<sup>^</sup> Comprises all recommendations with a reported status of 'Planning, Implementing and For further consideration' and one recommendation with a status of 'Split'.

\* Split responses include those where parts of the recommendation have been progressed separately and the reported status includes parts that are either completed, being implemented, planned, further considered or not accepted.



# Strengthening families

Children and young people are best cared for in loving families and supportive communities. A really important part of the child protection system is the work that we do to strengthen families whose children are at risk of coming into care. The support services we offer need to be therapeutic and responsive to the complexity of issues that vulnerable families experience.

A strong child protection system needs a continuum of services, including intensive and therapeutic approaches that help parents and extended family networks to safely care for their children.

South Australia has continued to expand the network of intervention services for families in contact with the child protection system. These services are part of our efforts to reduce the number of children needing to be removed for their safety.

We have established a range of targeted early intervention services that are responsive to the needs of families. Our approach is based on research and co-designed with stakeholders. Importantly, this directs services to those families with the most complex needs that have significant contact with the child protection system.

Recognising that Aboriginal children and families require supports that are culturally informed, funding has been dedicated to early intervention supports co-designed and delivered by Aboriginal service providers.

We have continued to have a strong focus on new, innovative services that are evidence-based and outcomes focused.

## A family-centred approach to universal services

### National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children

South Australia, through the Department for Child Protection (DCP), together with the Commonwealth Department of Social Services, co-led the development of a new national framework for protecting Australia's children - *Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031*, in collaboration with state and territory governments, SNAICC-National Voice for our Children, the Aboriginal Leadership Group and the National Coalition. The framework, released on 8 December 2021, sets out a national 10-year framework to improve the lives of children, young people and families experiencing disadvantage or who are vulnerable to abuse and neglect.

The National Framework will be implemented through five-year Action Plans. The first five-year Action Plans include a specific plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families as well as a general Action Plan. These are expected to be released by the end of 2022. South Australia is also jointly leading development of these first Action Plans, which are being co-designed with the Aboriginal Leadership Group. New governance arrangements will be established to oversee implementation of the National Framework. These will reflect the Closing the Gap commitments to shared decision-making and working in partnership with Aboriginal people.

### Early Learning Strategy

The first 5 years of a child's life is critical to building the foundational skills and abilities they need to be successful at school and in their future. To better support families and children in the early years, the Department for Education has committed to investing \$50.1 million over the first 4 years of the *Early Learning Strategy 2021–2031: All children thriving and learning*.

A commitment to promoting and supporting enrolment and attendance in preschools for children aged 3 and 4 years old continues as part of the 10 year strategy. To improve access and participation of Aboriginal children in preschool, the Department for Education is undertaking dedicated work and has launched a preschool enrolment campaign that includes targeted approaches for Aboriginal children and children in care.

In 2021, the Department for Education established a 2-year grant funding agreement with Playgroup SA to deliver new universal community playgroups, as well as upgrading the quality of existing playgroups. The department also continues to support the provision of playgroups on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands.

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### More families receive a service

The *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* provides for alternative service options and streamed pathways to provide a non-statutory response to notifications about a child being at risk of abuse or neglect. This enables DCP to refer families for a service response where this is more appropriate

than an investigative response. Families can be referred to designated South Australian Government agencies (State authorities), contracted non government organisations or other agencies for a service response. The rate of referral to services by these other means has been steadily increasing over the past 4 years and in 2021–22, approximately 50% of all notifications requiring a child protection response were referred to agencies who could more appropriately respond to the presenting risks to the child or young person.

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## Support for families with multiple and complex needs

### Implementation of the Child and Family Support System (CFSS)

The South Australian Government is committed to implementing a system of early supports that help families keep their children safe and well. Child and Family Support System (CFSS) provides a continuum of services designed to respond to differing degrees of complexity and safety concerns for children and families. Services span from community capacity building to intensive family services, and prioritise:

- infants at risk
- young parents
- adolescents with complex trauma
- Aboriginal families with multiple and complex needs.

This system of services is being built progressively, and is articulated in the *Roadmap for Reforming the Child and Family Support System 2021–2023* (the roadmap), released by the Department of Human Services (DHS) in September 2021. The roadmap consolidates the reforms led by DHS over the past few years and sets the directions for further development of the system. Building on from the services that have been implemented, a number of new initiatives and services have been established in 2021–22 as part of the latest phase of reform. These include:

#### > **Adults Supporting Kids (ASK) website**

In May 2021, DHS launched the Adults Supporting Kids (ASK) website, which makes it easier for parents or anyone with concerns about the safety of a child to find help by bringing together information about a range of South Australian specific services in one user-friendly place. It includes parenting and child safety advice, preparing for a baby, mental health and domestic violence support.

The website was expanded in February 2022 to provide resources for workers. The 'ASK Professional Portal' is now available to assist professionals to locate evidence-based 'wellbeing and safety' practices and resources across 12 topics including: health, parenting, education, domestic violence, drug use or legal issues.

#### > **Strong Families, Strong Communities**

DHS recommissioned the \$10 million Community Services Support Program to assist families with medium to low risk concerns (including those who may have contact with the child protection system), who need assistance to navigate access to services and community support.

With new services set to commence across the state in 2023, the Strong Families, Strong Communities program aims to improve outcomes for children by intervening early to strengthen families and communities and prevent the need for entry into or escalation within the child protection system.

#### > **Trauma Responsive System Framework**

DHS released the Trauma Responsive System Framework which was collaboratively developed with family, community and service stakeholders. An online tool is under development to assist the framework's principles to be embedded at different levels of organisations and across the system.

#### > **Culturally responsive, trauma responsive workforce training**

Yaitya Mingkamingka Purruapiinhi (Aboriginal Trauma Healing) training was provided by Kornar Winmil Yunti, Aboriginal Family Support Services and Tauondi Aboriginal College for practitioners working in Intensive Family Services. There were 13 workshops provided across the state, with further workshops to be provided in 2022–23.

#### > **Aboriginal Cultural Practice Framework**

DHS engaged two Aboriginal consultants to lead a collaborative process to develop an Aboriginal Cultural Practice Framework, which is to ensure that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle is embedded in family preservation practice across the CFSS.

> **Safe Start**

*(formerly CFARNs - Child and Family Assessment and Referral Networks)*

Safe Start supports family preservation in high-risk families with young children. These services seek to intervene early in the first 1000 days of life by providing intensive family support and evidence-based interventions to strengthen parenting capacity. In 2021–22, DHS expanded Safe Start to provide a service in the Far West region (Whyalla and Port Augusta) and additional support in northern metropolitan Adelaide.

> **Resilient Families**

This program delivered by the Benevolent Society is supporting families with children aged under 9 years who have been referred for protective family preservation where unaddressed concerns are likely to result in out of home care. The service operates in the southern metropolitan area through to the Murraylands and is expected to assist about 300 families over the program's 6 years.

> **Grandparents for Grandchildren**

In March 2022, the South Australian Government committed additional funding of \$800,000 over the next 4 years to Grandparents for Grandchildren, a key support and advocacy body for grandparents who are performing a primary caring role for their grandchildren.

This will increase the capacity of the organisation to support grandparents outside of the formal child protection system.

The ongoing development and improvement of the CFSS system is informed by a strong evidence base. In 2021–22, evaluations were completed for two programs – Safe Kids Families Together and Breathing Space – with the learnings informing the re-commissioning of services. An evaluation of a third program, a western suburbs pilot, Taikurtirna Tirra-apingthi Intensive Family Support Services for Aboriginal families at imminent risk of child removal, is due for completion mid-2023.

## Expansion of family group conferencing

DCP has strengthened its intervention efforts to ensure children's safety and mitigate risks of harm. The introduction of family group conferencing has been pivotal to responding more effectively to families and children in contact with the child protection system. They provide an opportunity for family and community-led decisions about a child's safety and build on the strengths of the family to secure safe care arrangements for the child or young person.

DCP first engaged Relationships Australia South Australia to deliver the family group conference service in 2020, initially as a 2-year trial. In 2021–22 it was established as an ongoing program.

In April 2021, the service was expanded to pilot a new family group conference program specifically for concerns relating to pregnant Aboriginal women who are the subject of a child protection concern about their unborn child. To further extend access to the family group conference services to Aboriginal families, DCP contracted Aboriginal Family Support Services to deliver an Aboriginal specific family group conferencing service in the northern suburbs.

Ninety-eight percent of participating families and professionals have provided positive feedback about the services.

## Early perpetrator support

Responding to perpetrators is part of the South Australian Government's commitment to enhancing the safety of women and their children by providing early assistance to perpetrators and supporting frontline workers to identify and support perpetrators to get the help they need to change their behaviours.

The Men's Referral Service provides dedicated, online support, counselling and referral for men seeking to change their behaviour and break the cycle of domestic and family violence.

Delivered nationally by provider No to Violence (NTV), the service is funded by DHS and commenced operation in South Australia in November 2021. The service provides an avenue for South Australian men at risk of perpetrating violence or abuse to seek support via a new, state-first dedicated hotline. The service is also available to provide advice to frontline workers to respond to perpetrators and make referrals to support, as well as offering support for relatives, friends and victims of domestic violence.

## Collaborative tools to plan for family safety

The Family Safety Framework is South Australia's coordinated service response to domestic, family and sexual violence. It provides a structured pathway for agencies in contact with families with a high risk of violence to share information and develop service responses. Family Safety Meetings are held every 2 weeks in 17 regions across South Australia, with representatives from key government and non-government agencies to coordinate joint responses for people at high risk of harm as a result of domestic, family or sexual violence.

In June 2022, the Office for Women introduced a new online portal for the Family Safety Framework. The Family Safety Portal is a digital platform that enables workers participating in Family Safety Meetings to carry out this work online in a secure and confidential environment. Workers can use the online portal to conduct risk assessments, make referrals and participate in Family Safety Meetings. The Portal went live in 3 regions in mid-June 2022, with a full statewide roll out to occur by the end of the year.

## Regional safety hubs

Safety hubs provide a safe local place for women experiencing domestic and family violence to access information and support. A network of safety hubs exists across regional areas in South Australia.

Four more regional safety hubs were established during 2021–22, in Whyalla, Port Pirie, Goolwa and Port Lincoln, each with differing models based on local need, and resourced by local agencies.

## Young parent support

A new pilot program run out of the Metropolitan Youth Health Service is supporting young parents who are in domestic and family violence situations to specifically respond to the impact of violence on their children. The Women's and Children's Health Network is delivering the Supporting Parents' and Children's Emotions (SPACE) pilot program, with program funding provided by the Attorney-General's Department.

Since the SPACE program commenced in June 2021 it has worked with approximately 50 young parents, mainly women aged 19 to 25 years, and over 70 children providing individual therapeutic counselling. The pilot has also connected with over 70 young parents and 45 children through group programs.

Having domestic and family violence support services situated within the Metropolitan Youth Health Services creates positive opportunities that may not otherwise occur in mainstream services, and enables specialised staff to engage with young parents and their children around safety and domestic violence.

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## Information sharing for informed decision-making

New legislative provisions have strengthened child safety measures in the role of the Teachers Registration Board. The *Teachers Registration and Standards (Miscellaneous) Amendment Act 2020* was passed by the South Australian Parliament in October 2020 and commenced on 1 July 2021, introducing improvements to information sharing arrangements between the Teachers Registration Board of South Australia and other relevant authorities to enable them to share information about teachers relevant to child safety and workforce mobility.

In September 2020, education ministers noted the new Best Practice Framework for Strengthening Child Safety through Teacher Registration. The Framework includes principles on the sharing of information, amongst and between regulators, about teachers, applicants for teacher registration or formerly registered teachers.

The Teachers Registration Board of South Australia is actively involved in work to implement aspects of the Framework, including participation in the development of a national information sharing agreement between teacher regulatory authorities and a statement of commitment about assessing teachers' suitability to teach.

## A national solution to safely sharing information

Vulnerable children whose families move them interstate, can be at greater risk of harm if critical history is not readily accessible to child protection authorities.

In April 2022, DCP staff joined all other Australian jurisdictions in using a new database, which has been specifically designed to share sensitive information across multiple systems and organisations. Connect for Safety (C4S) is a national child protection information sharing solution, which was developed in New South Wales and has been described as world-leading.

C4S sources information from all jurisdictions about children, young people and their relevant relationships. It aims to enhance safety for all children and young people by enabling cross-jurisdictional access to critical child protection information. C4S is designed to help Australian statutory child protection workers carry out their protective functions more efficiently, allowing authorised users to search for people of interest and identify those known to a child protection agency in another jurisdiction.

### Additional Highlights

- > Established 3 additional Child and Family Safety Networks (CFSNs) in the Inner North, Inner South, and Playford metropolitan areas to enable interagency collaboration in addressing the needs of complex families.
- > Developed and implemented a data collection tool across CFSS Intensive Family Services to capture family risk and protective factors across multiple domains at service commencement and service closure. This is to better understand family complexity, service impact and inform system improvement.
- > Introduced a digital referral management system in the CFSS Pathways Service, providing centralised triaging to improve the processing and monitoring of referrals, and better understanding of service engagement outcomes for families.

### Actions from the last 12 months

The following priority actions were established in the Safe and well 2021 Annual Report.

Actions	Lead	Status
Work with partners to specify a program of work to support the delivery of Target 12 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.	Department for Child Protection Department of Human Services	<b>Complete</b> The South Australian Government has committed to activities to achieve Target 12 as part of South Australia's Implementation Plan for the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.
Co-lead the finalisation of Safe and Supported: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031 and development of the First Action Plan and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan.	Department for Child Protection	<b>In progress</b> The National Framework was agreed by all community services ministers and released in December 2021. Jurisdictions are working in partnership with Aboriginal representatives to develop the First Action Plan, including an Aboriginal-specific Action Plan, which is expected to be released in December 2022.
Develop an evidence informed family support services model to respond to vulnerable families earlier.	Department of Human Services	<b>Complete</b> The Family Support and Early Intervention program (now Strong Families, Strong Communities) was recommissioned to align with the Child and Family Support System Outcomes Hierarchy and provide short term case management, group work and community activities to strengthen protective factors in families with medium level risks.  The new service is scheduled to commence in early 2023.

Actions	Lead	Status
<p>Continue to establish pathways to the right support at the right time, both for services making family referrals and for families and others to seek earlier help themselves.</p>	<p>Department of Human Services</p>	<p><b>Complete</b></p> <p>The CFSS Pathways Service has been established as a centralised, single point of entry for services to refer families. Pathways triage family referrals and record family complexity data.</p> <p>The new Strong Families, Strong Communities program is to provide earlier support for families along with a self-referral pathway for families and community members. Families can also seek help through the Adults Supporting Kids (ASK) website.</p>
<p>Strengthen evidence informed practice within the child and family support system and implement a communities of practice approach.</p>	<p>Department of Human Services</p>	<p><b>Complete</b></p> <p>The <i>Common Elements</i> initiative combines evidence-informed practice guidance with evidence-informed implementation methods to support Intensive Family Services practitioners. In 2021, the Common Elements approach was trialled with Family Practitioners.</p> <p>A <i>Communities of Practice</i> approach was implemented, providing opportunities for leaders and practitioners to discuss and inform implementation of the Child and Family Support System reform.</p>
<p>Procure an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation to implement an Aboriginal specific family group conferencing service.</p>	<p>Department for Child Protection</p>	<p><b>Complete</b></p> <p>Aboriginal Family Support Services commenced operating an Aboriginal specific family group conferencing service in August 2021.</p>
<p>Continue to progress work with Wellbeing SA and other agencies on the development and implementation of a First 1000 days of life strategy.</p>	<p>Department for Health and Wellbeing</p>	<p><b>In progress</b></p> <p>Wellbeing SA is supporting the First 1000 days with the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In partnership with the Caring Futures Institute at Flinders University, undertaking formative research to better understand parent and caregiver barriers and enablers to accessing services and supports within the SA Early Years System for the child's and their own health and wellbeing.</li> <li>• In partnership with the Women's and Children's Health Network, supporting the implementation of a research project to improve antenatal care with a specific arm of the research exploring the barriers to Aboriginal mothers receiving best-practice and evidence-based models of care.</li> </ul>
<p>Deliver the Supporting Parents' and Children's Emotions (SPACE) pilot program, supporting young parents who are in domestic and family violence situations and specifically responding to the impact of violence on their children, with program funding provided by the Attorney-General's Department and services delivered by the Women's and Children's Health Network.</p>	<p>Attorney-General's Department Department for Health and Wellbeing</p>	<p><b>In progress</b></p> <p>The Women's and Children's Health Network is delivering the Supporting Parents' and Children's Emotions pilot program, with program funding provided by the Attorney-General's Department.</p>

The background is a solid blue color. Overlaid on this are several white lines that create a series of overlapping triangles and a large, wide, shallow curve at the bottom. The lines intersect to form a complex geometric pattern.

# Thriving in care

We want children and young people in care to have every opportunity to thrive and grow up healthy and happy. Children in care need a stable, caring environment, support to heal from trauma and the chance to enjoy the same opportunities as other children. Recognising the unique and specialised needs of children and young people, we have been purposefully establishing a range of out of home care options and embedding therapeutic approaches across all services.

We remain committed to growing family based care, as this provides the best opportunity for most children and young people, who are not able to live safely with their parents, to thrive. We recognise foster and kinship carers as a cornerstone of the care system. The Department for Child Protection (DCP) upholds the Statement of Commitment it has made to these carers – that they are Informed, Supported, Consulted, Valued and Respected – and continues to pursue ways to demonstrate this throughout its business.

We have focused active efforts on keeping Aboriginal children and young people connected with family, kin and community. This includes funding Aboriginal service providers to support carers of Aboriginal children and young people and active efforts to apply the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle.

We know that children and young people in care require support across key services – health, emergency services, education – that is child-focused, trauma and developmentally informed and responsive to specific therapeutic needs. We have been transforming our non-family based care settings to be highly therapeutic, continuing to embed the Sanctuary Model in DCP's residential care settings. This has been supported with a refresh of the physical environment in which children and young people live, and new strategies to increase safety.

## Safely reunifying children

Reunification services are a critical element of the child protection system and the services offered to help keep families safely together.

DCP's first priority for the provision of a child's or young person's long term care is their birth family. When children and young people enter care, DCP assesses how best to meet their needs for safety, wellbeing and permanency, whether this be through reunification with their family or through a long-term placement in care. The aim of reunification services is to help families learn skills and be supported to make the changes necessary to keep their children physically and emotionally safe.

In 2021, DCP underwent a public tender process to secure improved family reunification services that are trauma-informed, demonstrate evidence-based service models and provide both practical and therapeutic support for parents. A total of \$57.4m is being invested over 9 years with 9 service providers to deliver Family Reunification Services from 1 July 2021. The re-commissioned services include two Aboriginal specific services, Bookyana Cultural and Community Services and Aboriginal Family Support Services.

### Intensive support for family reunification

A new centre-based intensive support and reunification service, the New Parent and Infant Network (Newpin) Program, commenced on 1 July 2021. Funded under a joint Commonwealth – State arrangement using an innovative Social Impact Bond approach, Uniting Communities is delivering the \$18.2m Newpin Program over 7 years.

Newpin works therapeutically with families who have a young child or children placed in care to facilitate safe reunification. The program provides intensive intervention for up to 18 months to support the reunification of children under 6 years to live safely with their families.

It is anticipated the Newpin Program will support more than 200 families over 7 years. Since the commencement of the program until 30 June 2022, Newpin has received referrals for 29 families. Families in the program in metropolitan Adelaide are being supported by two sites at Smithfield and Port Adelaide. A third Newpin site will open in the southern regional area of South Australia soon.

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## Building a focus on child safety

### Family court

DCP and SAPOL have been participating in a 3-year pilot program to co-locate child protection and policing officials in the family court, which has now been extended until June 2025 following an external evaluation that found the initiative was delivering positive outcomes.

As part of the Fourth Action Plan of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*, the Australian Government provided \$10.4 million over 3 years (2019–2022) to undertake a pilot in state and territory family courts across Australia, with the exception of the Northern Territory. The co-location pilot aimed to improve the timeliness and quality of information shared between the family courts and state and territory agencies, and to facilitate more collaborative inter-jurisdictional working arrangements.

In South Australia, the DCP and SAPOL practitioners commenced co-location in the family court in May 2020. In the last financial year, the co-located staff have supported nearly 650 requests for information, mainly from judges and associates, as well as child court experts and independent children's lawyers.

### **A child safety focus in health**

The Department for Health and Wellbeing (DHW) has established a new Chief Child Protection Officer (CCPO) role, providing strategic inter-agency leadership on all matters relating to child protection within the Health portfolio. This includes legislation, regulations, policy, protocols and interagency service design, including SA Health's role and commitments in progressing the National and South Australian Governments' broader child protection system reforms.

To establish more consistent, equitable and accessible services for all children across South Australia the CCPO is leading the co-design of a new state wide model of care for the SA Health Child Protection Service. Alongside this, a new governance structure will support coordinated oversight for all matters within DHW relating to child protection and children's policy.

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## **Needs based care and protection**

### **Supporting children to heal from trauma**

A trauma lens is central to DCP's Practice Approach, guiding staff in their critical work with children, young people and families. Supporting this, DCP offers a 2-day child development and trauma training course, and has recently introduced a multi-level trauma informed practice training program. Level 1 has been created for all DCP staff and is an online program aimed at increasing participants' understanding of trauma and what it means to be trauma aware in their specific role. Level 2, which is for non-service delivery staff and Level 3, for staff who have direct client contact, are face-to-face programs aimed at developing a deeper understanding of trauma and offering practical and relevant tools to support trauma-informed practice.

### **Safe and stable placement matching**

DCP seeks to place children and young people in safe, nurturing and stable environments when they first come into care or whenever a placement change is required.

Identifying a suitable placement with a provider of family based or non-family based care to meet the unique needs of a child or young person is complex. In late 2021, DCP engaged an external ICT provider to work together on developing a new software program, called PlaceMatch, that will assist with placement matching. Once complete, the program will identify suitable and available placements by searching real-time placement capacity with providers, and assessing the clinical profile of the young person, the clinical profile of any young people already in a placement, along with other considerations for a safe placement.

### **Life story work**

Having enduring records of key moments in a child's life contributes to their sense of identity. DCP and non-government partner, Key Assets, are working to trial an innovative app that safely stores photos, videos and other important memories for children and young people in care.

The 3-month pilot will involve 30 children and young people and their carers. The CaringLife app makes it easy for both carers and young people to upload content including photos, artwork or certificates, and add captions. It provides a digital and secure way to support children and young people to capture their life story and preserve important memories and milestones.

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## **Cultural connection and identity**

### **Prompting active efforts**

The DCP Manual of Practice (the Manual) is a critical tool that supports DCP staff to implement the requirements of the DCP Practice Approach and the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*. The Manual provides consolidated, consistent and clear information on processes and practice for staff working with families, children and young people. The Manual is subject to continuous updates to reflect best practice.

Throughout 2021–22, chapters in the Manual were updated to include Aboriginal Child Placement Principle (ACPP) active effort prompts alongside key practice activities. These prompts support staff to implement the ACPP elements in their work with Aboriginal children, young people and families.

## Family led decision-making for Aboriginal families

DCP has developed and launched a framework for family led decision-making for Aboriginal families, which aims to support and empower families to lead decision-making in partnership with DCP, and is an important mechanism to challenge the power imbalance Aboriginal families' experience.

The framework provides strategies for DCP case workers to enable family led decision-making across all levels of child protection interventions for significant decisions about Aboriginal children and young people. It encourages opportunities to enable children and young people and their families to be part of decisions that are significant to them.

## Peak body for Aboriginal children and young people

The South Australian Government has committed to establishing a new Aboriginal peak body representing the interests of Aboriginal children and young people. The peak will ensure a dedicated focus on supporting and advocating for the needs of Aboriginal organisations who are providing services to Aboriginal children and young people.

Throughout the last year, SNAICC-National Voice for our Children, has been engaged by DCP to work with the South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Network, the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People and other Aboriginal South Australians to develop options for the peak, including considering models used interstate.

DCP has committed funding to support the establishment and implementation of the preferred peak model. Following this Aboriginal-led engagement, and agreement on a model that has the support of the Aboriginal community, the peak is expected to be established in 2022–23.

## Cultural connections for Aboriginal young people in care

In August 2021, DCP's Youth Adventure and Recreational Services ran its first cultural camp, Ringbalin, supported by Ngarrindjeri Elder Major Sumner. A number of other day and overnight camps have since occurred, along with other cultural activities.

Cultural camps are an important way to provide Aboriginal children and young people with the opportunity to connect with Country and culture, and DCP has now embedded them into the ongoing program of activities for children and young people in residential care.

As well as cultural camps, DCP has engaged Aboriginal young people in residential care in activities to both connect them with culture and strengthen their voice.

Young Aboriginal women in residential care are participating in their own Sista program (the Sista Circle Leadership Group), which provides opportunities in a small group for young Aboriginal women to connect with others and develop confidence in speaking up for themselves.

The 'Strong in Culture Strong in Voice' choir, made up of 10 young people living in residential care, has performed successfully at several functions including the national CREATE Foundation conference held in Adelaide in April 2022. The choir has been designed to empower young people to become confident, while also providing another medium to have their voices heard. It aligns with the Sanctuary Model of therapeutic care with a focus on healing, resilience and reconciliation.

## Enhanced recording of cultural information

To support implementation of the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Child Placement Policy that was launched in early 2021, DCP made changes to its Connected Client Case Management System. The enhancements make it simpler for DCP staff to record cultural and linguistic demographic information for children, young people and families, and support efforts to keep children and young people in care connected to their cultural and ethnic identity.

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## Growing family based care

### Our Statement of Commitment to carers

South Australian carers make an incredibly important contribution by providing vulnerable children and young people a safe place to call home. DCP recognises the critical role carers play in the lives of children and young people and is actively working to improve the level of support they receive. Together with Connecting Foster and Kinship Carers SA and Child and Family Focus SA (CAFFSA), DCP has continued to build on the Statement of Commitment with South Australian foster and kinship carers that was released in June 2020 by embedding the Statement of Commitment across its operations, including:

- > Expanding the information and resources on the DCP carer platform, including dedicated content about trauma-informed and responsive care for children and young people
- > Establishing foster and kinship carer roundtables with the Minister for Child Protection
- > Increasing base and respite payments to general foster and kinship carers
- > Increasing resourcing for carer advocacy services by \$800,000 over 4 years
- > Launching the Caring Together newsletter for foster and kinship carers
- > Providing kinship carers with training and support from DCP's Therapeutic Carer Support Team and Psychological Services
- > Implementing mechanisms for carers to have access to flexible respite arrangements
- > Recognising the South Australian Foster Carer of the Year and the Kinship Carer of the Year through the inaugural SA Child Protection Awards, hosted by DCP
- > Celebrating Foster and Kinship Carers Week which acknowledges the invaluable contribution of foster and kinship carers.

### Improving the model of support for kinship carers

We know children and young people are best cared for in safe, nurturing family environments. Where children and young people cannot live safely with their immediate family, DCP explores potential kinship placements. These placements can help maintain strong family and cultural connections, and minimise disruption to the child or young person. Kinship care continues to grow and be the largest form of family based care.

In 2021–22, DCP commenced reform of its Kinship Care Program to enhance the support provided to kinship carers. The first stage of the reform process has been to expand the DCP Kinship Care Program with an additional 16 FTEs and realign the program to connect more closely with DCP's regional service delivery.

As part of the second stage, DCP consulted widely with a range of stakeholders, including kinship carers, about the opportunities for service improvements to the DCP Kinship Care Program. This consultation has informed the following reform priorities:

- Build a strong foundation for kinship care
- Equip kinship carers with the supports they need
- Deliver culturally-appropriate kinship care for Aboriginal children and young people
- Sustain kinship carers over the longer term
- Focus on safe, high quality practice
- Strengthen partnerships and interfaces.

The DCP Kinship Care Program reforms complements the Aboriginal Kinship Care Pilot Program established in 2020 to provide support for kinship carers of Aboriginal children and young people. The Program is delivered by three Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations – Aboriginal Family Support Services, Kornar Winmil Yunti Aboriginal Corp and InComPro.

### Kinship care support in remote areas

In August 2021, DCP announced a new program to support kinship carers in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands. The NPY Women's Council Aboriginal Corporation (NPYWC) has been contracted to deliver a culturally responsive placement stability service for up to 30 kinship carer families of Aboriginal children and young people. The service has commenced and staff from NPYWC are now undertaking regular support visits to kinship carers situated on the APY Lands.

### New models of family based care

Trials have commenced for two new models of family based care, delivering additional ways to provide more support to carers

Treatment Foster Care Oregon - Adolescent (TFCO-A) is a 2-year pilot program implemented by DCP in partnership with provider OzChild to support a total of 14 young people. The program provides young people aged 12 to 17 with an opportunity to live with a specially trained treatment carer who will

provide full-time one-on-one support for 6 to 9 months. The aim of the program is for the child or young person to return to family or a stable, long-term foster carer.

DCP also commenced a 12-month trial in partnership with Life Without Barriers of the MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ program. This model of carer support creates 'constellations' of carers who live in a similar area and provides ongoing peer support, access to shared resources and respite care.

Two constellations have been established, the first in the southern suburbs and a second in the north east of Adelaide. Planning is underway for a third constellation based in the Adelaide Hills.

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## Transforming non-family based care

### Embedding therapeutic care

Providing a therapeutic environment is a critical part of responding to the needs of children and young people in residential care. DCP is well advanced in introducing the Sanctuary Model of therapeutic care across its residential care homes. The evidence-based Sanctuary Model is founded on the same trauma-informed care principles that are central to DCP's work with children and young people in care.

In February 2021, the next phase of implementation commenced, with MacKillop Family Services training the Sanctuary Core Team and leadership members. Four Sanctuary practitioners including a dedicated Aboriginal Sanctuary practitioner are working with the Core Team to implement the model and provide practice support. Critically, the first action of the Sanctuary Core Team was to add Culture as one of the eight DCP Sanctuary Commitments to prioritise cultural safety for Aboriginal children, young people and staff. Collaboration with children and young people has also led to key enhancements to the model to include child-friendly terminology. The Sanctuary Core Team has also developed specific tools and resources to support implementation of the model.

Two-day training for all DCP residential care staff commenced in March 2021 and an overview of the Sanctuary Model was presented virtually to DCP care workers, residential care staff and CAFFSA members in June 2021. Since commencing, over 700 staff have completed the training.

DCP has collaborated with Monash University to ensure the implementation of Sanctuary is practice-based, outcomes focused and accountable to formal external evaluation standards.

## Refreshing and personalising care environments

Creating warmer home environments in residential care properties is part of DCP's commitment to enhance and strengthen its therapeutic focus for young people in non-family based care. Throughout the year, DCP has been increasing the number of residential care properties it uses as well as refurbishing them to be more contemporary and to better meet the needs of children and young people. These property updates have provided more flexibility to respond to different groups of children and young people, including groups of siblings. Following feedback from the sector, construction of a new property was completed in September 2021 to meet the need for a single, high needs intensive placement option. The aim is to ensure suitable accommodation is available in the locations that best suit young people and with the facilities in place to support their safety and wellbeing.

The DCP MyPlace program works with young people to choose the décor, furniture and soft furnishings for bedrooms and shared living areas. This provides an opportunity for young people to personalise their environments and reflect their individuality. There is a strong focus on incorporating young people's cultural connections and identity, along with ensuring the physical environment is responsive to sensory needs.

The MyPlace program is progressively being delivered house-by-house, with the aim of undertaking makeovers across all of DCP's residential care houses. The first MyPlace fit-out occurred in October 2020 and since then, MyPlace has engaged with 65 children and young people across 23 properties.

## Child protection and youth justice intersect

Interagency approaches are being pursued, including through the Missing Guardianship Children and Young People Steering Committee, to reduce children and young people in care having contact with the youth justice system.

There are multiple and complex factors associated with young people in care being involved in the youth justice system, including significant traumatic experiences, early disadvantage and neglect, disability, drug and alcohol misuse and dysregulated behaviours. While residential care can be a common factor for young people involved in both the child protection and youth justice systems, it is not the main factor causing young people to engage in offending behaviour.

The ongoing efforts to transform non-family based care settings with therapeutic models of care and to create safe environments recognises the complexity of issues young people in care have experienced, often including multiple and complex trauma. Prevention and intervention initiatives include:

- embedding the Sanctuary Model of therapeutic care
- offering the MyPlace program, to personalise environments for young people in residential care
- rolling out the Power to Kids: Respecting Sexual Safety training program
- funding the Guardian for Children and Young People for \$1.87m over 4 years to carry out the residential care visitor program.

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## Environments that keep children safe

### Strengthening young people's online safety

In 2021 the Department for Education, in consultation with the Office of the eSafety Commissioner, updated the Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum (KS:CPC) resources to enhance student activities and include the latest information about online safety and consent education. To complement this, the KS:CPC training program was also updated and a new KS:CPC website was launched to provide teachers with easy access to information, resources and training.

Across 2022, a major review of the KS:CPC is underway which is expected to be completed in 2023. The review includes broad consultation with education academics, leaders and teachers and will provide opportunities to further strengthen online safety for children and young people.

### Training care staff to promote sexual safety

DCP is currently embedding a new program focused on strengthening prevention and responses to sexual exploitation, harmful sexual behaviours and dating violence for young people in residential care.

Power to Kids: Respecting Sexual Safety is a trauma-informed program designed to support staff working with young people in DCP residential care. The program focuses on providing practical resources, prevention and early intervention strategies and

equipping carers with the skills and confidence to talk to children and young people about sexual safety. Increasing children and young people's understanding about healthy relationships and sexual safety is part of empowering them to keep themselves safe.

DCP has engaged Mackillop Institute and Family Services to develop a bespoke model for South Australia, which complements the Sanctuary Model. The program is being rolled out across DCP residential care on a house-by-house basis.

### National commitment to prevent child sexual abuse

The South Australian Government has worked in partnership with other state and territory governments and the Australian Government to develop the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030*, which was released in October 2021.

The National Strategy is a whole-of-nation framework to establish a coordinated and consistent approach to better prevent and respond to child sexual abuse in all settings, including within organisations, families and online. The National Strategy was a key recommendation of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and is the first national strategy focusing specifically on combatting child sexual abuse and improving responses to victims.

The National Strategy is designed to support and complement existing Australian Government and state and territory reform. It will also link with the work of the National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse, which was established in 2021 with funding from the Australian Government.

The South Australian Government is supporting the implementation of the National Strategy through involvement in a number of key working groups. Implementation of the first National Action Plan began at the end of 2021, when the National Strategy was published, and will continue until the end of the 2024–25 financial year.

## Supporting children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviours

Across government, agencies are working to improve services and responses for children and young people with harmful sexual behaviours.

The Department for Education has undertaken a review of the documentation it provides to support educators and care providers across all education sectors to respond to children's concerning and harmful sexual behaviour. New resources will be implemented in the second half of 2022 to support responses to the continuum of children's sexual behaviour, including harmful sexual behaviour. This includes a new procedure, guideline, and professional development for educators and care providers and new resources for students, parents and carers.

Under the First National Action Plan of the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030* Australian, state and territory governments have committed to work together to develop a framework to prevent and respond to children with harmful sexual behaviours. Part of this also includes increasing workforce capability for preventing and responding to children with harmful sexual behaviours and supporting the community to better understand and respond to developmentally appropriate sexual behaviours and harmful sexual behaviours in children. SA Health is providing SA Government representation on the Interjurisdictional Working Group for Children with Harmful Sexual Behaviours.

To build the evidence-base for improved identification and responses for children and young people with harmful sexual behaviours, DCP is investing in a multi-year program of research being undertaken by the Australian Centre for Child Protection with the Government of Western Australia. The research will help with understanding the advocacy, support and treatment service needs of children and young people with harmful sexual behaviours and the development of South Australian specific, evidence-based service delivery and capacity building responses.

## Responding to perpetrators of child sexual abuse

### Law reform to improve child safety

The *Statutes Amendment (Child Sexual Abuse) Act 2021* came into effect from 1 June 2022. This includes the introduction of two new offences under the *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935* - Failure to report suspected child abuse (section 64) and Failure to protect a child from sexual abuse (section 65).

These new offences, which have been introduced in response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, aim to improve child safety, strengthen reporting and better protect victims of child sexual abuse. The new offences prescribe a legal obligation to report known or suspected child sexual abuse to police. This applies to employees, contractors and volunteers of all organisations who operate facilities or provide services to children under their supervision, including approved foster and kinship carers.

The *Statutes Amendment (Child Sexual Abuse) Act 2021* also amends various procedural, evidential, and sentencing provisions to promote child safety, reduce the risk of child sexual abuse, ensure sentences reflect current standards and provide appropriate support for victims giving evidence in proceedings.

The maximum penalties on a range of child sex offences will also be increased under the *Statutes Amendment (Child Sex Offences) Act 2022*, which was passed by Parliament on 7 July 2022. This will ensure that maximum penalties for child sex offences in the *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935* are consistent with the severity of the conduct, and with penalties applied for equivalent offences interstate. The Amendment Act also updates the list of registrable offences in the *Child Sex Offender Registration Act 2006*, including adding a range of newer Commonwealth child sex offences.

## Additional Highlights

- > Commenced the new Court of Appeal jurisdiction to provide more timely hearing of matters by specialist appeal judges, including interlocutory appeals in prosecutions involving child sexual abuse offences.
- > Trialled the use of body worn cameras by staff at Kurlana Tapa Youth Justice Centre in addition to other existing safeguarding measures such as privacy screens in bedrooms and the use of body scanners in lieu of body searches.
- > Established a new SA Health Statewide Child Protection Policy Evidence and Research Advisory Committee consisting of child protection academics and other subject matter experts and chaired by Emeritus Professor Kim Oates OAM, an internationally recognised child protection expert.
- > Commenced development of an online training program, providing more flexible access to training to support mandated notifiers to understand their reporting obligations under the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*.
- > Updated the mandatory Responding to Risks of Harm, Abuse and Neglect in Education and Care training for all new and continuing staff, volunteers and third-party providers working within education and care settings across government, Catholic education and independent schools.

## Actions from the last 12 months

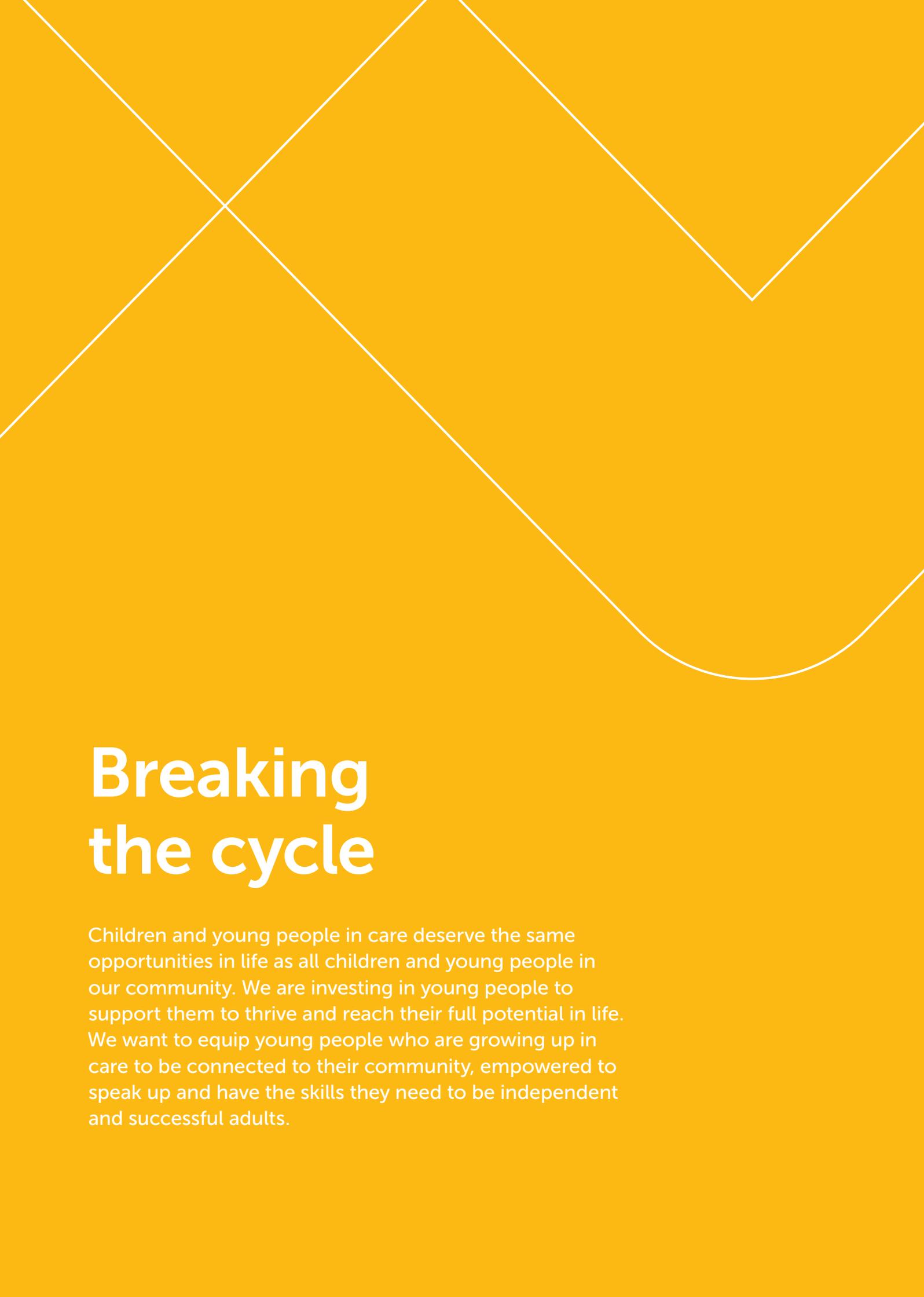
The following priority actions were established in the Safe and well 2021 Annual Report.

Actions	Lead	Status
Commence trials of new models of family based care – Treatment Foster Care Oregon – Adolescents (SA) program, MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ carer support model.	Department for Child Protection	<b>Complete</b> A service agreement was executed in June 2021 with provider OzChild to undertake the TFCO-Adolescent program.  The MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ program operated by provider Life Without Barriers was launched in April 2022.
Specify and implement key reform priorities for kinship care.	Department for Child Protection	<b>In progress</b> A range of reforms are underway, including a targeted support approach, a new learning and development framework and the development of dedicated resources to support kinship carers in their roles.
Bring into operation the Statutes Amendment (Child Sexual Abuse) Bill, addressing recommendations about responding to perpetrators of child sexual abuse, following its passage in the Parliament	Attorney-General's Department	<b>Complete</b> The <i>Statutes Amendment (Child Sexual Abuse) Act 2021</i> commenced operation on 1 June 2022.

Actions	Lead	Status
Bring into operation the Civil Liability (Institutional Child Abuse Liability) Amendment Bill 2021, implementing the intent of recommendations about supporting survivors of abuse.	Attorney-General's Department	<b>In progress</b> The <i>Civil Liability (Institutional Child Abuse Liability) Amendment Act 2021</i> passed the Parliament on 30 November 2021 and commenced on 1 August 2022. The Amendment Act also provides a facility for victims who previously entered into settlements to re-litigate their child abuse claim and have previous agreements set aside where it is 'just and reasonable' to do so.
Continue to progress Stages 2 and 3 of the Canine Court Companion project, which aims to reduce the stress and anxiety of vulnerable victims and prosecution witnesses at legal assessments and criminal justice proceedings, with Stage 2 including support in court waiting areas and Stage 3 including support in court rooms and CCTV suites.	Attorney-General's Department	<b>In progress</b> The Canine Court Companion program has continued to offer support to vulnerable witnesses at appointments. With continued training, it is hoped the canine companion will be ready to provide support in court waiting areas and during courtroom hearings by the end of 2022.
Continue to collaborate with Commonwealth, state and territory governments to improve therapeutic treatment and responses for children with harmful sexual behaviours.	Department for Health and Wellbeing	<b>In progress</b> Under the <i>National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030</i> First National Action Plan, Australian, state and territory governments will work together to develop a framework to prevent and respond to children with harmful sexual behaviours. SA Health collaborations include representation of the SA Health Chief Child Protection Officer on the Interjurisdictional Working Group for Children with Harmful Sexual Behaviours.
Establish a centralised case management program for children under long term guardianship (specified person).	Department for Child Protection	<b>Complete</b> A central team has been established and case management of children under long-term guardianship (specified person) order transferred from DCP regional office to the new team.
Establish an intensive case management support service for adolescents.	Department for Child Protection	<b>Closed</b> To support young people with complex needs transitioning from care in residential care settings, DCP has established the Next Steps Pilot Program.
Enhance the quality of child safe environments compliance data and training.	Department of Human Services	<b>In progress</b> DHS has introduced greater monitoring of compliance to training quality standards for the <i>Safe Environments: Through their eyes</i> training. This included observations of approved public training providers to ensure their training is being provided in accordance with the program's training protocol.  DHS continued data cleansing of the Child Safe Environments Compliance System.

Actions	Lead	Status
<p>Develop a Model of Mental Health Care and Operational Guide for CAMHS work with children and young people in care.</p>	<p>Department for Health and Wellbeing Department for Child Protection</p>	<p><b>In progress</b></p> <p>DHW has drafted Operational Guidelines for CAMHS work with children in care. When complete, this will sit alongside the CAMHS Model of Care, which is written to encompass all services and clients. The Operational Guidelines will go out for consultation and be finalised in the second half of 2022.</p> <p>CAMHS staff are currently guided in their practice through the CAMHS Community Operational Guidelines, as well as the CAMHS Intranet which features a specific page containing relevant articles, links and information to assist practice related to children who are under guardianship. This includes aspects of child protection legislation relevant to CAMHS staff, such as referrals to State authorities and information sharing, the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle, DCP Practice Approach and escalation points and pathways.</p>





# Breaking the cycle

Children and young people in care deserve the same opportunities in life as all children and young people in our community. We are investing in young people to support them to thrive and reach their full potential in life. We want to equip young people who are growing up in care to be connected to their community, empowered to speak up and have the skills they need to be independent and successful adults.

The *Children and Young People Safety (Act) 2017* enshrines the obligation to provide a range of services and supports to care leavers up to the age of 25 years. This recognises that the government's responsibility for young people in care does not simply cease when they turn 18 and their guardianship order ends. Just like young people in the community, navigating housing, further education and employment and finding independence can be both exciting and challenging. The Department for Child Protection has been actively pursuing new partnerships and exploring best practice service models to better wrap around supports for young people in this critical phase as they move to adulthood.

We have been working across government and with non-government organisations to give children and young people greater opportunities across education, training, housing, health, disability and when living independently.

Supporting young people to successfully transition from care to adulthood also contributes to our prevention efforts. Intergenerational contact with the child protection system is too common. We must break this cycle of abuse and neglect. We want to ensure these young people don't become parents to the next generation of children in care, because we want all young South Australians to have the opportunity to thrive and achieve their personal best.

## A therapeutic approach to specialised needs

### Disability and development program

The Department for Child Protection (DCP) continues to expand the support available for children and young people in care with a disability or developmental delay. The DCP Disability and Development Services program provides support through 3 teams, including a Disability Consultancy team that work alongside casework services, a Therapeutic Carer Support team that work with kinship carers, and a Specialist Services team who work alongside residential care services.

The Disability and Development Services program is staffed with multidisciplinary, allied health professionals with extensive paediatric experience. A key focus for the program over the past year has been to promote a general understanding of how to support children in care with a disability or developmental delay. The Disability Consultancy team has been delivering tailored training to staff across the department, including inductions for new residential care workers. Over 500 staff have attended the various training sessions delivered during 2021–22.

The program has also been able to increase the support offered in locations outside of metropolitan Adelaide. The Disability and Development Services program has travelled across the state to support young people with disability and developmental delay to be identified and to support carers in regional and remote areas with strategies to strengthen their relationship with the child in their care.

## Supporting survivors of abuse

The criminal justice system is critical in responding to crimes of sexual violence, including child sexual abuse. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse made a range of recommendations for law reform to improve experiences for survivors.

The *Statutes Amendment (Child Sexual Abuse) Act 2021*, which came into effect from 1 June 2022, implements a number of measures to provide appropriate support for survivors in their participation in the criminal justice process when giving evidence in child sexual offence proceedings. These include allowing the court to make directions about the manner and duration of questioning and the questions that may or may not be put to the witness.

The Act also expands the categories of witnesses who can give pre-recorded evidence to include all child sexual abuse victims and survivors, no matter what their age is at trial, and any other child or vulnerable witness giving evidence in a child sexual abuse matter.

As part of a project to improve audio visual link (AVL) infrastructure and capabilities across the justice sector, the Courts Administration Authority has installed or upgraded over 50 units across more than 20 locations to ensure AVL facilities are available in regional and metropolitan courtrooms.

The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, in a joint initiative with Guide Dogs SA/NT, has been expanding its canine court companion service to provide support and comfort to vulnerable witnesses, and especially children.

Following the success of Zero, a now retired canine court companion, two year old Labrador Zeb has been training to be the new court companion. Zero had attended 190 appointments with vulnerable witnesses between April 2019 and July 2021. Since starting in May 2022, Zeb has attended 4 appointments with 4 children. With continued training, it is hoped Zeb will be ready to provide support in court waiting areas and during courtroom hearings by the end of 2022.

## Establishing the National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse

On 21 October 2021, the Australian Government announced the Blue Knot Foundation and its partners, the Australian Childhood Foundation and The Healing Foundation, will establish and deliver the National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse (National Centre). The Australian Government has committed \$22.5 million over five years for the establishment and operation of the National Centre.

The National Office for Child Safety will work closely with the National Centre to progress outcomes under the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030* to:

- raise community awareness and aim to stop the stigma for survivors of child sexual abuse
- improve the skills of the workforce to better help child and adult victims and survivors of child sexual abuse
- lead new or improved models to support adult and child victims and survivors of child sexual abuse through national research and program evaluation.

Australian, state and territory governments will work with the National Centre to develop and deliver education and capacity building measures aimed at children and young people, parents, carers and families, professionals and tertiary students.

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## Opportunities to access education and development activities

### Collaborating to support education engagement

Positive learning relies on children and young people being safe, well and having access to the right supports when needed, so they can actively participate and achieve in their education.

Across 2021, DCP and the Department for Education implemented a joint Plan of Action that built upon their longstanding commitment and efforts to transform the experience and learning outcomes of children and young people in care in South Australia's government schools and preschools.

The 13 actions from this first Plan focused on strengthening how the two departments collaborate to ensure every child in care has access to the support they need to learn and thrive. All actions were completed by the end of 2021, with some continuing to be built upon in future stages, along with new focus areas, through a second joint Plan of Action that was released in January 2022.

Since implementing the first plan:

- > at the end of the 2021 calendar year, 82% of children in care had a personalised One Plan to support their inclusion and achievements
- > more than 40 Education Champions have been nominated across DCP to promote the importance of education for children and young people in care
- > across 2021, 200 children in care were actively supported with mentoring and over 130 supported with engagement programs, including tutoring.

### Lifting education outcomes

The Department for Education's Children in Care Service has now been delivering its critical interagency service for two years. The team of social workers, with knowledge of both the education and child protection systems, has grown significantly since it was established, demonstrating the valuable role they fulfil in supporting educators and DCP case workers to address issues and barriers to children and young people in care achieving in their education.

During its two years in service, the team has received more than 1000 service requests, of which 600 requests have led to active case work to support a child or young person in care, and made 165 referrals to an interagency therapeutic needs panel. The service supports staff working with children in care to navigate issues including behaviour, attendance, funding, transition and enrolment, and suspensions and exclusions.

The Children in Care Service has facilitated meaningful child-centred interventions in preschools and schools, improved school capabilities for effective trauma-informed responses, and supported sites to think creatively about strategies for improving connection and engagement of children and young people in care.

### **Information sharing to boost access to learning supports**

Under their first joint Plan of Action, DCP and the Department for Education established a collaborative approach to seeking and utilising health, developmental and disability assessments to support children and young people in care with a disability in accessing the learning supports they need.

Since January 2021, there have been over 90 unique requests to share information between the two departments in relation to individual children and young people in care for this purpose. This is in addition to the ordinary information exchanges at interagency or Team Around the Child meetings, and has benefitted children and young people by:

- supporting access to the National Disability Insurance Scheme
- coordinating requests for psychometric assessments to address the needs of both departments, reducing re-assessments
- supporting their behaviour and development at school, and in their placement
- supporting applications for individualised education funding.

Across 2021, the Department for Education supported 867 children and young people in care with a disability by providing extra support from their preschool or school through the Inclusive Education Support Program.

### **Maths tutoring to improve engagement**

Throughout 2021, the Department for Education offered free one-to-one online maths tutoring to select students as part of its Learning+ pilot program. A targeted approach was created for 30 young people in care in years 6 and 8 to participate in the pilot program in term 4.

Young people were matched with a tutor who delivered a tailored learning experience twice a week for up to 10 weeks, to build each young person's confidence in maths learning.

Regular feedback was given to the young person, their carer and classroom teacher to support their continued academic growth. Carers were encouraged to be involved and present at each learning session, recognising the important role they play in improving educational outcomes for children and young people in care.

### **Non-government schools dedicate scholarships to children in care**

For some children and young people in care, attending a non-government school can provide educational opportunities that support and foster their individual interests and aspirations. DCP has continued the partnership it established with Catholic Education South Australia in 2020 to provide children and young people in care with school scholarships in Catholic schools across metropolitan and regional locations. As at 30 June 2022, over 260 children and young people have been offered a scholarship.

In 2020–21, DCP established new partnerships with several more independent schools who committed to offering dedicated scholarships for children and young people in care to attend their schools fee-free and with a package of educational supports.

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## **Transition to adulthood and independence**

### **Dame Roma Mitchell Grants**

The South Australian Government supports eligible children and young people who are or have been in care, to access Dame Roma Mitchell Grants enabling them to achieve personal goals, undertake activities that contribute to their health and wellbeing and engage in personal development opportunities.

There are two annual grants rounds, with a number of young people using the funding to purchase essential furniture and household items, access social and recreational opportunities including sports equipment and musical instruments, and to complete study or pre-vocational courses. In 2022, DCP moved to online applications to make the grants more accessible.

## Developing cooking skills

Developing an interest and skills in healthy eating habits and food preparation is important for young people as they transition to independence. Over the last 4 years, the DCP Salisbury office has supported 150 young people to learn new cooking skills through a partnership with HomeFresh Experience Cooking in Golden Grove.

The program is specifically designed for young people working towards independence, teaching them how to shop for food and cook sustainable healthy meals within a budget, empowering them to live more independently.

At the end of the 5-week program, each participant receives cooking utensils, kitchen tools and a recipe pack so they have all the information they need to prepare meals at home.

## Service models that build independence

As part of ensuring young people are supported to develop their independence and access pathways to safe and stable accommodation when they leave care, DCP undertook a redesign of its Supported Independent Living Services (SILS) model. Following a successful tender process, 10 providers commenced offering the new SILS on 1 July 2021. SILS enables young people in care to live in independent shared housing in the community from the age of 16 years, with the support of visiting workers. The service helps young people transition to secure, independent living arrangements. A key element of the new model is that support is individualised according to the level of need of the young person.

## Piloting new approaches to leaving residential care

Recognising that young people leaving residential care often have more complex needs, the state government has invested in a new program to support young people making the transition from residential care to independent living. The Next Steps Pilot commenced operation in February 2022 and is supporting a minimum of 20 young people aged up to 21 years leaving residential care.

Centacare Catholic Family Services in partnership with Aboriginal Sobriety Group and Housing Choices SA are delivering the pilot program. Young people in the program receive case management, service coordination and practical support to help them adapt to adult life. The 3.5 year pilot will be reviewed to assess outcomes for the young participants and to inform future directions for the program and post care services more generally.

## Post care support

In 2021–22, DCP undertook extensive consultation to inform the redesign of its post care service model for young people leaving care.

The consultations provided an opportunity to deepen the department's understanding of the needs of care leavers, their experiences in accessing services, as well as to identify opportunities to shape a service response that best meets their needs going forward.

Redesigning the service model is an opportunity to better align the post care services with the commitment to care leavers in the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*. The new model will also focus on addressing the diverse needs of young care leavers, including Aboriginal young people and those in regional areas.

The state government has also committed an additional \$3.2m over the next 4 years to extend post care services, providing an immediate opportunity to increase service delivery in targeted regional locations.

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## Investing in their future

We are committed to pursuing every opportunity for children and young people in care to reach their full potential, much like any parent would for their child. Over the last year, the state government has continued to expand the *Investing in their future* initiative, which includes a range of services and programs that offer priority access to children and young people in care, and those who have left care up to the age of 25. This initiative recognises that access to good education, health and housing are protective factors and foundational to a good life.

DCP has actively pursued partnerships with government, private and philanthropic organisations that share DCP's high expectations and aspirations for children and young people with a care experience, and commitment to giving them the same opportunities in life that everyone deserves.

## Empowered to succeed

In June 2022, DCP entered into an exciting new partnership with Youth Opportunities to offer 20 scholarships for young people with a care experience to complete a personal leadership program. Commencing late 2022, the Thrive@Life program gives young people aged 15 to 25 the opportunity to gain the skills, habits and attitudes to succeed in their future and empower them to build their happiness and confidence.

The 10-week program combines self-paced learning with one-on-one support from a personal coach, who helps the young person work on their goals. Young people also participate in group workshops to connect with others and share in their learning experience.

## Securing housing for care leavers

We know that stable housing provides a foundation for young people's good health and wellbeing, opportunities to engage in employment or further education and better outcomes overall. DCP and the SA Housing Authority are collaborating to improve housing outcomes for young people who are transitioning from care.

In May 2021, DCP appointed a Specialist Transition Lead dedicated to managing and escalating housing requests through a centralised process with SA Housing Authority. Over the last year, the two departments collaborated to support 77 public housing offers for young people in care, of which 32 were for Aboriginal young people in care, and house 3 kinship care families in need of safe, stable accommodation.

Over the next two years, through a joint Plan of Action, the departments will continue to explore ways to improve housing outcomes for young people through regular data sharing, identifying culturally safe housing for Aboriginal children, young people and families, and accessing community housing pathways for young people leaving care, including those with disability.

## Pathways to employment

One way DCP has been partnering to improve outcomes for young people with a care experience has been by collaborating with SA Housing Authority to create a unique pathway for access to apprenticeships and traineeships through the agency's *Employment Pathways Program*.

In May 2022, DCP and SA Housing Authority co-hosted an information session where young people with a care experience heard about SA Housing Authority's construction focused 250 Apprenticeships Pilot Program. Sixteen young people registered and those that attended got the chance to speak with group training organisations about the broad range of trades on offer, including bricklaying, carpentry and electrical.

Following promotion of the apprenticeships program, a number of young people were exploring the employment opportunities offered.

## Resolving fines for care leavers

Over the last year, DCP has been working with the Fines Enforcement and Recovery Unit (Fines Unit) within the Department of Treasury and Finance, to explore ways of resolving fines for children and young people in care.

Recommendations from the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission Report saw the Victims of Crime Levy in South Australia made discretionary for magistrates to apply in the case of vulnerable young people. Building on this, DCP and the Fines Unit have committed to working together in the best interests of children and young people to ensure that, where possible, the fines of young people transitioning from care are forgiven to help remove barriers as they approach adulthood and independence.

## Extending care beyond 18

DCP offers two programs that support young people over 18 to continue residing with their family based carer until the age of 21 or 25 – Stability in Family-Based Care Program and the Over 18 Education Initiative.

These programs are now being managed by one central team to ensure consistency and a streamlined approach to over 18 carer payments. Young people are able to transition between the programs depending on their circumstances. With the programs being consolidated, carers and young people will now have the same worker regardless of which program they are accessing.

## Preparing for an independent future

In 2022, the Government of South Australia announced an \$800,000 investment over 4 years in the CREATE Foundation, the national body representing the voices of children and young people with a care experience. CREATE is also delivering the SORTLI app and the CREATE Your Future program for young people aged 15 to 25 years, which seek to reduce social isolation and empower young people to be informed and independent in decisions about their future. This new investment will support development of future study, employment and housing pathways for young people transitioning to adulthood.

Young people in DCP residential care have had new opportunities to learn some of the essential skills they will need for living independently once they leave care. Selected DCP residential care staff have been trained to deliver the CREATE Your Future program, which takes young people through various modules related to life skills such as budgeting, cooking and accessing services.

Three CREATE Your Future groups have been held over the past year.

## Additional Highlights

- > Improved information flow of school attendance reporting for children and young people in care to assist schools in planning supports for individual children and young people.
- > Implemented changes to enhance the practices and processes of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) Vulnerable Witness Team, who provide a dedicated service to minimise changes in solicitors and changes in prosecution decisions, and to ensure the ODPP continues to comply with the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.
- > Commenced exploration of best practice models to increase collaboration between SA Health and SA Police in undertaking forensic interviews with children and young people who have been a victim of child sexual assault.

## Actions from the last 12 months

The following priority actions were established in the Safe and well 2021 Annual Report.

Actions	Lead	Status
Advance new models for supporting young people after they turn 18, including post care support services and the Next Steps Pilot providing post-residential care support.	Department for Child Protection	<b>In progress</b> DCP consulted with stakeholders to develop a future model for the delivery of post care services in 2023. The Next Steps Pilot commenced operation in February 2022 and is supporting a minimum of 20 young people aged up to 21 years leaving residential care.
Continue expansion of <i>Investing in their future</i> and promotion of services.	Department for Child Protection	<b>In progress</b> DCP actively pursued partnerships with government, private and philanthropic organisations to expand the <i>Investing in their future</i> initiative, including non-government schools, the SA Housing Authority, Youth Opportunities and the Fines Unit.
Establish a DCP and SA Housing Authority partnership to deliver improved housing pathways for young people leaving care.	Department for Child Protection SA Housing Authority	<b>In progress</b> DCP and the SA Housing Authority have collaborated to develop a Memorandum of Administrative Agreement and Plan of Action to guide joint activities and support housing pathways for young people in care.

Actions	Lead	Status
Continue the partnership between the Department for Child Protection and the Department for Education to identify and implement shared actions that improve educational outcomes for children and young people in care.	Department for Education Department for Child Protection	<b>Complete</b> An Interagency Committee and working group is in operation overseeing the joint Plan of Action to support educational outcomes for children in care.
Partner with the Department for Health and Wellbeing and the health networks to identify and implement collaborative action to improve the health outcomes for children and young people in care.	Department for Health and Wellbeing Department for Child Protection	<b>In progress</b> DCP and SA Health have developed arrangements to progress a shared plan to improve access to health services for children and young people in care.
Continue implementation of the flexible resourcing for children and young people in care made available at key transition points, including starting or changing preschool or school to support transition and learning outcomes.	Department for Education	<b>Complete</b> This funding commitment to support the transition to preschool and school of children in care continues to be implemented. Further guidance is in development for schools to assist in identifying evidence-based practices or programs that support the intended outcomes of the transition funding for children and young people in care.
Promote the importance of education for children in care through the Children in Care Service within the Department for Education's Student Support Services.	Department for Education	<b>Complete</b> The Children in Care Service continues to support school and preschool leaders to deliver education to children in care, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing case specific advice about options available in education and child protection to support the education of children in care at school or preschool</li> <li>• working with other agencies to support and represent the child's education needs</li> <li>• supporting schools and preschools in Complex Case Review Meetings</li> <li>• delivering evidence-based professional learning with staff in preschools, schools and other agencies</li> <li>• identifying trends and monitoring the population level data of the education progress of children in care to improve systems.</li> </ul>
Continue implementation of One Plan and differentiated learning support and interventions for all children and young people in care, including Aboriginal students.	Department for Education	<b>Complete</b> Children in care are an identified priority group for a One Plan (personalised learning plan). DCP case workers and carers are involved in the process and ongoing reviews.

Actions	Lead	Status
As part of reforms responding to the one in four students with functional needs, establish a model of support that leads to improved learning and development outcomes for students in South Australian Government schools and preschools, including children and young people in care.	Department for Education	<b>In progress</b> Children in care continue to be a focus in ongoing reforms supporting the engagement and learning needs of students with functional needs.
Commence development of a systemic strategy to support a significant reduction in exclusionary discipline in South Australia's (SA) public schools, including an emphasis on minimising the use of exclusionary discipline for Aboriginal children and young people, students with a disability, children in care, and younger children.	Department for Education	<b>In progress</b> Children in care continue to be a focus in strategies to reduce exclusionary discipline in SA public schools with DCP identified as a key stakeholder in the continued development of this work.
Promote and support improved enrolment and attendance in preschools, with a particular focus on 3 and 4-year old Aboriginal children and children in care.	Department for Education	<b>Complete</b> A commitment to promoting and supporting 3 and 4-year old enrolment and attendance in preschools will continue as part of the 10-year <i>Early Learning Strategy 2021–2031: All children thriving and learning.</i>
Continue to identify opportunities through the Building Capacity in Vulnerable Families working group, which reports to the South Australian Government Aboriginal Affairs Executive Committee, to improve outcomes for Aboriginal children and families.	Department of the Premier and Cabinet	<b>In progress</b> Engagement with the Vulnerable Families Working Group is ongoing, and work has commenced with a view to establish how to set up families for success, joined-up levers for investment to identify where agencies sit along the continuum, and some measurable system-level outcomes.





# Building a system for the future

The high-risk nature of child protection means that in building the system for the future we must be responsive, evidence-based and have accountability systems in place. We remain committed to continual learning and improvement, and finding new ways to deliver services to keep children and young people safe and well. We do this together with our partners and by listening actively to children and young people, carers, families and the community.

We recognise how critical it is to listen to the voices of children and young people who are at the heart of all we do as a child protection system. The state government has continued to strengthen formal oversight and advocacy roles, which safeguard the rights and interests of children and young people and assist in amplifying their voices.

We engage with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and non-government organisations (NGOs) as sector partners to explore child protection challenges and find new solutions together. Across our workforce and the sector, we are building capacity in the system and using data and insights to inform our practice, and identify opportunities for improvement.

Celebrating our achievements is also a necessary part of our growth as a vibrant and positive child protection sector. The inaugural South Australian Child Protection Awards held in 2021 showcased the breadth of contributions by agencies and individuals across the community to protecting and caring for children, and underscore the extraordinary value of the partnerships that make up the child protection sector.

## Engaging with children and young people

### Strategy for child and youth engagement

Children and young people are at the centre of everything we do. Listening to their voices, taking on their feedback and understanding what they need to thrive continues to be our priority.

In July 2021, the Department for Child Protection (DCP) launched its first Child and Youth Engagement Strategy 2021–2023. The strategy was developed together with young people with a care experience. It outlines the department's key goals to actively engage young people in DCP projects, programs and policy development, to learn from what young people share with us and to collaborate with partner agencies to improve outcomes for children and young people.

An essential part of the strategy is the young persons' group, No Capes for Change. This group of young people with a care experience meet regularly and provide valuable advice to DCP about key policy matters affecting children and young people in care and leaving care. The important contribution of the group was recognised in 2021, with No Capes for Change receiving the SA Child Protection Award for the 'voice of children and young people' category.

Bringing the strategy to life is the Child and Youth Engagement Action Plan, which reflects the practical steps that DCP will undertake in partnership with children and young people to ensure their voices are heard and actioned. The work of the Action Plan is being overseen by a working group of young people, DCP regional office staff, and external agencies.

## Representing the interests of Aboriginal children and young people

In 2021–22, DCP supported a community-led consultation process to develop a model for an Aboriginal peak body for children and young people. This body will represent the interests of Aboriginal children and young people in South Australia, and is critical to achieving the reforms required to address over-representation and improve outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people in care.

The consultation process, led by SNAICC-National Voice for our Children with guidance from the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, engaged Aboriginal people, communities and organisations across the state in both metropolitan and regional locations. A report providing options for the proposed model was received in August 2022.

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## Partnering together for better outcomes

### Strengthening sector partnerships

Non-government providers are critical partners in the child protection system. DCP has continued to take deliberate steps to collaborate across the child protection sector, invite sector initiative and innovation and to build our capacity to work together. Over the past 12 months, DCP hosted four Out of Home Care Providers: Heads of Industry Forums. These regular Chief Executive level forums have played an important role in this, bringing together Executives from DCP's contracted ACCOs and non-government service providers and providing opportunities to work together, to build an understanding of the issues facing the sector and jointly develop solutions.

## Recognising excellence in child protection

The first ever SA Child Protection Awards were held in 2021. Hosted by DCP in partnership with the National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, the awards celebrated the outstanding achievements of children and young people, carers, volunteers, staff and organisations from across the child protection sector.

Winners and finalists were announced at an awards ceremony held on 8 September 2021 at the Adelaide Convention Centre. Over 400 people attended the Awards, which has now become an annual event.

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## Growing a skilled and stable workforce

DCP has continued to undertake a rolling recruitment process for new residential care staff, which was initially instated in January 2021. Together with the use of assessment centres that place candidates in live, role-play scenarios with specially trained residential care staff, these approaches have supported DCP to attract and recruit staff to meet need across the workforce.

The Out of Home Care Providers: Heads of Industry Forums, hosted by DCP, have provided an opportunity to discuss shared challenges across government and non-government service delivery, with a dedicated forum held in May 2022 to consider issues related to attraction, recruitment and retention of a skilled workforce.

The South Australian Government has committed to developing a workforce strategy for the future child protection system. Consultation will be undertaken to shape a strategic approach to strengthening workforce capacity and capability and ensuring an appropriately sized and skilled workforce for the future.

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## Enhancing quality and safeguarding

### Significant reviews and learnings

The child protection system is subject to sustained scrutiny. Reviews and inquiries are an important opportunity to reflect, learn and continue to improve how we deliver services to strengthen families and keep children safe. A number of significant reviews and inquiries are currently being conducted in South Australia. The outcomes of these will help inform future action across the system.

## Reporting significant incidents to keep children safe

DCP has strengthened its incident reporting processes in light of the recommendations of the independent review conducted by Judge Paul Rice in 2021. The response to this review has included establishing a Significant Incident Reporting Unit (SIRU), an education campaign for DCP staff about reporting significant incidents that was carried out with the support and oversight of the Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment, and legislation providing tougher penalties regarding breaches of written directions.

When a significant incident occurs that impacts the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in care, it is important that immediate steps are taken to care for that child or young person. Also important is advising the appropriate decision makers so they are aware of what has occurred and any broader implications of the event.

DCP launched the SIRU in September 2021. The SIRU receives all significant incident reports in DCP, enabling central reporting, coordination and monitoring of significant incident reports. SIRU is supported in its functions by a purpose-built module in the Client Incident Management System, which supports centralised reporting, monitoring and documentation of client incidents.

A *Significant Incident Reporting Procedure* was developed and made available to support DCP staff to meet their obligations when a significant incident occurs. Additionally, an update was made to the *Significant Incident Management – Requirements for Service Providers* to support service providers in the timely reporting of significant incidents.

### Stronger penalties for breaches of written directions

A written direction is an important regulatory notice that can be issued to protect a child or young person in care. These notices can be used to direct a person not to communicate with or harbour or conceal a child or young person who is under the guardianship of the Chief Executive of DCP.

Amendments were made in August 2021 to the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* and the *Bail Act 1985* to increase the penalties that apply to people who breach written directions around contact with children or young people in care. The maximum penalty for a breach increased from 12 months imprisonment to 3 years for a first offence or 4 years imprisonment for a second or subsequent offence.

## Strengthening the role of oversight and advocacy bodies

In 2021, the *Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016* was amended to legislatively establish the role of the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People and enshrine key functions and powers for the role including to promote the rights, development and wellbeing of Aboriginal children and young people within South Australia at a systemic level.

Previously the Commissioner was appointed by the state government but without legally enshrined powers. The Amendments provide the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People with the same powers as the Commissioner for Children and Young People, including powers to undertake systemic inquiries.

The state government has committed \$1.87 million over 4 years to reinstate the Child and Young Person Visitor Program. The Visitor Program is to be undertaken by the Guardian for Children and Young People. It provides an additional safeguard for children and young people in residential care by carrying out home visits and providing an opportunity to meet with and advocate for children and young people.

## A learning culture built on research, data and reporting

### The Early Intervention and Research Directorate

The Department of Human Services (DHS) has developed tools and put infrastructure in place to capture structured data at key points of service delivery in the Child and Family Service System (CFSS). The Pathways & Client Outcomes Management System will assist with informing client and program level outcomes. Linking this to the Early Intervention and Research Directorate (EIRD) policy dataset will further enable population level reporting, data driven policy development and system evaluation.

CFSS data, describing the complexity and social/ ecological context of families referred for Intensive Family Services (IFS), has been presented at DHS Communities of Practice forums. This information sharing has helped shift expectations and create a shared understanding of the level of complexity that IFS aim to support.

## Governance and accountability

To enhance across government collaboration and an effective, coordinated approach to child protection reform, ongoing oversight is provided by the Child Protection Reform Portfolio Management Board (PMB). The Board is chaired by the Chief Executive of DCP and includes chief executives and senior officers across relevant state government agencies. The PMB is accountable to Cabinet via the Senior Leadership Committee.

### Additional Highlights

- > Established new legislation providing for the formation of a Social Workers Registration Board and the setting of standards relating to social work services, scope of practice and prescribed qualifications.
- > Launched a new Aboriginal Language Interpreting Service in January 2022, with two Aboriginal languages interpreters offering services in a range of Aboriginal languages for families, children and young people across government service settings including family support services and child protection.



## Actions from the last 12 months

The following priority actions were established in the Safe and well 2021 Annual Report.

Actions	Lead	Status
Establish a Significant Incident Reporting Unit in DCP.	Department for Child Protection	<b>Complete</b> A new Significant Incident Reporting Unit has been operational in DCP since September 2021.
Develop a coordinated program of engagement with the sector.	Department for Child Protection	<b>Complete</b> DCP has established a number of coordinated mechanisms to engage with the sector. These include regular forums attended by heads of agencies, a forward plan of action with the sector's peak body – Child and Family Focus SA – and a newsletter that is distributed widely to providers.
Continue to support the South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Network (SAACCON) to build its network with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations that focus on Aboriginal family safety.	Department of the Premier and Cabinet	<b>In progress</b> Preliminary discussions with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet's Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation team, and the SAACCON have commenced with a view to facilitate Aboriginal data sovereignty and an Aboriginal data governance pilot.
Engage SNAICC to lead consultation on developing options for a model for an Aboriginal peak body for children and young people, for implementation in 2022–23.	Department for Child Protection	<b>Complete</b> SNAICC-National Voice for our Children has undertaken a community led consultation process. The final report was provided to DCP in August 2022.
Continue to develop and maintain the infrastructure supporting the Key Integrated Data System (KIDS) under the Vulnerable Family Information Management System.	Department of the Premier and Cabinet Department of Human Services	<b>In progress</b> Work has continued to refine the core infrastructure of the KIDS, enhancing the user interface and underlying datasets.  Planning has commenced to implement KIDS in the CFSS Pathways Service and trial KIDS in other departments, such as the DHS Screening Unit and SA Health Child Protection Services.
Collect, process, prepare and deliver non-identified, aggregate datasets from multiple government agencies for the Department of Human Services' Early Intervention Research Directorate (EIRD) on a quarterly basis to evaluate and inform the effectiveness of its early intervention program activities.	Department of the Premier and Cabinet	<b>Ongoing</b> A dataset is delivered to the DHS EIRD team quarterly.
Progress a digital solution for improved placement matching – Stage 1 and 2.	Department for Child Protection	<b>In progress</b> DCP has worked with a contracted ICT developer to build and test a suitable digital application to support placement matching and reporting. The digital solution is expected to be fully operational by June 2023.

## Next steps

We are committed to strengthening families, supporting children and young people in care to thrive and breaking the intergenerational cycle of contact with the child protection system. This commitment extends beyond responding to the recommendations of royal commissions.

The state government will engage with partners and the community to actively listen to their views on how we can build the child protection system of the future. Hearing from children, young people, carers, the sector and the community will be critical to ensuring we focus our efforts on the right things to keep children safe.



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