



# Keep Them Safe

A shared approach to child wellbeing

A plan for building the capacity of non-government organisations (NGOs) to take an extended role in service delivery and for developing the workforce

**DISCUSSION PAPER**



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## Introduction

*Keep Them Safe* is the NSW Government's five-year action plan to improve the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in NSW. Its aim is that all children in NSW are healthy, happy and safe, and grow up belonging in families and communities where they have opportunities to reach their full potential.

The NSW Government recognises that the primary responsibility for caring for and supporting children lies with parents, families and communities. It also recognises that providing services to support families and communities in this vital role is not only the responsibility of the Department of Human Services, Community Services, but of a range of Government agencies as well as non-government organisations (NGOs). As a result, implementing *Keep Them Safe* will be characterised by a collaborative working partnership between the NGO and government sectors, and an expanded role for NGOs in the provision of supports and services.

### Partnership approach

NGOs and government bodies will need to work in a genuinely collaborative way in order to improve outcomes for children, young people and families. Hallmarks of the *Keep Them Safe* partnership approach will be reciprocity, responsibility-sharing and open communication information channels between government and non-government partners, all of which will ultimately lead to a more flexible and responsive system.

This approach will involve agencies working together in a way that is coordinated and integrated to respond to the multiple needs of children and families and in the context of their community.<sup>1</sup> Not only does this mode of working lead to more integrated and holistic service delivery experience for clients but it also proves cost effective for organisations as it reduces the need for the replication of services. On a broader level, successful partnerships between services also improves overall sectoral competency through knowledge exchange and skill sharing.

However, the process of initiating, developing and sustaining partnerships is complex and challenging. A study undertaken by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) found that successful social partnerships were established and sustained when participants effectively engage in 'partnership work' which is defined as:

*...the interactive and collaborative process of working together to identify, negotiate and articulate goals, and to develop processes for realising and reviewing those goals.*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cappo, D. 2002 in Hayes, A., Gray, M. and Edwards, B. 'Social Inclusion: Origins, Concepts and Key Themes', Australian Institute of Family Studies, found at [www.socialinclusion.gov.au/](http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au/). Accessed at May 2009

<sup>2</sup> Billet, S. Clemans, A. and Seddon, T. 2005. *Forming, developing and sustaining social partnerships*, National Centre for Vocational Education Research.

The NCVER found that effective partnerships work is composed of five main dimensions:

- cultural-scoping work;
- connection-building work;
- capacity-building work;
- collective work; and
- trust building.

From these five dimensions, five corresponding guiding principles of forming, developing and sustaining partnerships were identified:

**1. Building and maintaining shared purposes and goals** - involves identifying the partners' interests and concerns, and developing a framework for collectively realising goals. Sustaining the partnership involves the partners actively reflecting upon, reviewing and revising goals, identifying achievements, and renewing commitment.

**2. Building and maintaining relations with partners** - involves building trust and commitment, encouraging participation, and developing inclusive and respectful processes. Sustaining the partnership involves endorsing and consolidating existing relationships, recognising partners' contributions, and facilitating new and strategic relationships.

**3. Building and maintaining capacities for partnership work** - involves engaging partners in the collective work of the partnership, by developing the infrastructure and resources needed to achieve goals. Sustaining the partnership involves securing and maintaining partners who engage effectively with both community and external sponsors, and managing the infrastructure required to support staff.

**4. Building and maintaining partnership governance and leadership** - involves formulating and adopting consistent, transparent and workable guidelines and procedures for the partnership work and enactment of leadership. Sustaining the partnership involves developing and supporting close relations and communication between partners, and effective leadership.

**5. Building and maintaining trust and trustworthiness** - involves establishing processes that engage and inform partners, and which encourage cooperation and collaboration. Sustaining the partnership involves focusing on partners' needs and expectations, and ensuring that differing needs are recognised and addressed<sup>3</sup>.

Implementing *Keep Them Safe* will require the establishment of shared governance arrangements, and the development of partnerships between NGOs, as well as between NGOs and Government agencies.

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<sup>3</sup> Billet, S. Clemans, A. and Seddon, T. 2005. *Forming, developing and sustaining social partnerships*. National Centre for Vocational Education Research.

Within NSW this partnership approach is articulated in *Working Together for NSW: An Agreement between the NSW Government and the NSW Non Government Human Services Sector*. *Working Together* was launched jointly in June 2006 by the NSW Government and the Forum of Non-Government Agencies (FONGA) and is a compact between the NGO sector and the NSW Government.

*Working Together* outlines the shared goals, values and principles of the interdependent relationship between the community NGO sector and the NSW government, and stipulates the following broad principles which are seen as the basis for a strong relationship between the Government and the non-government sector:

- **evidence-based approach:** policy, program development and service delivery should be based on reliable evidence
- **outcomes:** decisions should be informed by a focus on real outcomes for people and communities
- **accountability:** both Government agencies and non-government organisations must be accountable and transparent in the way in which they spend public funds, in a manner appropriate to the level of expenditure
- **respect:** both Government and non-government organisations must respect each other's roles and acknowledge that these roles may lead to differences of opinion around particular issues
- **communication:** wherever possible, Government agencies and non-government organisations should make open communication and consultation a priority, particularly where changes to policies, programs or services are being considered or advocated
- **independence:** non-government organisations are independent agencies that are responsible and accountable for their own performance and management
- **inclusiveness:** the Government is obliged to balance the interest of all New South Wales citizens and has a responsibility to allocate resources accordingly.<sup>4</sup>

Another key policy that will inform the development of partnerships to support the implementation of *Keep Them Safe* is the NSW Aboriginal Affairs Plan *Two Ways Together 2003-2012*, which is a ten year plan to improve the well-being of Aboriginal<sup>5</sup> people with a focus on those areas identified by Aboriginal communities as being of a priority – health, housing, education, culture and heritage, justice, economic development and families and young people. Under *Two Ways Together*, an initiative called the Partnership Community Program has been developed to improve service delivery and outcomes for Aboriginal people through partnerships between Aboriginal Communities and the Australian and NSW Governments. This program provides an important framework for informing the implementation of *Keep Them Safe*.

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<sup>4</sup> NSW Government and the Forum of Non-Government Agencies, *Working Together for NSW: An Agreement between the NSW Government and the NSW Non-Government Human Services Sector, 2006*.

<sup>5</sup> Within this document, the term Aboriginal encompasses Torres Strait Islander people.

## Expanded role of NGOs

The NSW Government recognises the important role that NGOs play in delivering community services<sup>6</sup> and in building a fairer, more sustainable and inclusive society. A cornerstone of the *Keep Them Safe* action plan is the expansion of the role of NGOs in providing services and supports to children and their families and strengthening the capacity of communities to care for them. Key components of the new role of NGOs will be an increased responsibility for the delivery of out of home care and early intervention and prevention services by NGOs as well as radically restyling the way these services will be delivered in New South Wales.

In order to support the NGO sector to meet the twin challenges of expansion and reform, *Keep Them Safe* commits to various strategies that aim to develop the capacity of the non-government sector and equip them to effectively take on this expanded role in service delivery.

## Building capacity

Strengthening the NGO sector's capacity is aimed at ensuring that it is efficient, effective and sustainable over the long term as well as being responsive to change, flexible, and innovative.

### What is 'capacity'?

Sharing a common understanding of what is meant by 'capacity' is important will be important to both NGOs and Government in developing and implementing strategies to strengthen or build capacity. A simple definition of the term that has been proposed in community development literature defines 'capacity' as:

*... (having) the ways and means needed to do what has to be done. It is much broader than simply skills, people and plans. It includes commitment, resources and all that is brought to bear on a process to make it successful.<sup>7</sup>*

From the literature, it is possible to distil a concept of capacity as being comprised of three key components or indicators. These are:

1. **skills**, knowledge, authority and/or means
2. **resources** to carry out the initiatives, namely:
  - human (including workers and leadership),
  - financial
  - infrastructure (buildings, equipment, access, and organisational structures)
3. **commitment** to directing the skills and resources to achieving the desired outcomes. This includes commitment to the ongoing assessment of the initiatives

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<sup>6</sup> Throughout this document the term "community services" is used to refer to the range of supports and services delivered by NGOs within a community setting. It is therefore broader than those services or agencies funded by the Department of Human Services Community Services.

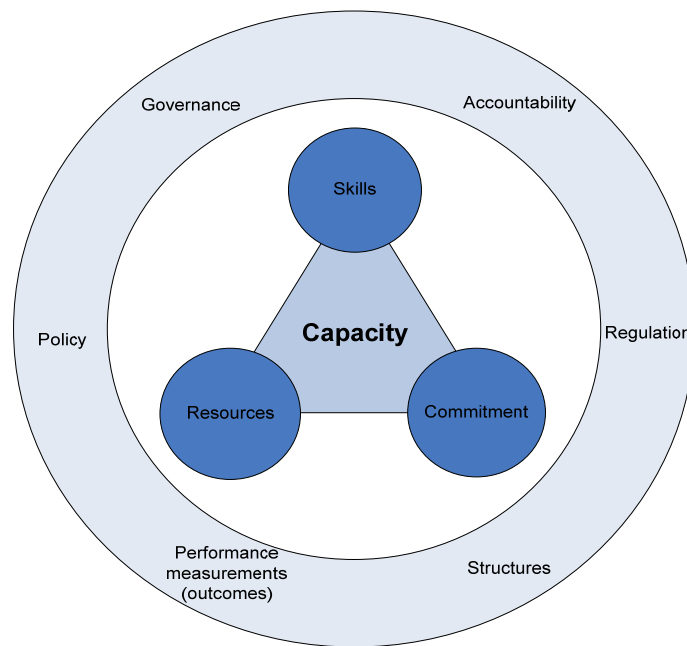
<sup>7</sup> F. Frank and A. Smith, 'The Community Development Handbook – A Tool to Build Community Capacity', Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), 1999

(planning, implementation and results), continuous quality improvement (supported by outcome standards and indicators), and a culture of adaptation to changing circumstances.

These elements of capacity occur within an operating context and are supported by a range of enablers including policy, regulation, governance, structures, accountability, and performance measurement (outcomes).

This conceptualisation of capacity is represented in Figure 1 below.

*Figure 1 - Components of Capacity*



Source: KPMG (2010)

The NSW Government has already committed to a number of reforms which are designed to improve the capacity of the NGO sector in NSW and improve the administrative and service delivery efficiency of programs where the NGO sector is a key contributor. These activities include:

- program specific strategies, including the commitment to invest in NGO capacity building under *Keep Them Safe* (this project), disability industry development under *Stronger Together*, the NSW Health NGO Review, and reviews of funding arrangements for Out of Home Care and Community Service Grants Program services.
- the Better Services and Value Plan, including a review of government expenditure on purchased services from NGOs scheduled to commence in 2010, and
- a funding reform project established as part of the service delivery plan for the new Department of Human Services which will deliver a whole of agency approach to NGO funding aimed at reducing costs to NGOs and Government;

improving service quality and better integrating and mobilising the NGO sector to leverage community resources.

In NSW these reforms, together with actions to reduce red tape and improve funding administration, provide the impetus to drive efficiencies in the NGO sector and to leverage improvements in productivity as an offset to increasing costs for the sector, particularly wages.

On 11 February 2010 the Productivity Commission launched its report on the *Contribution of the Not For Profit Sector*. The report explores a wide range of reforms to remove unnecessary burdens and costs faced by the NGO sector and improve its efficiency. The report highlights the need for better regulation, improved funding arrangements and enhanced opportunities for innovation. The Report will be of substantial use to NSW in guiding policy on reforming government purchasing and contracting arrangements with the NGO sector, and will be closely analysed by the Department of Human Services as it moves forward with its funding reform activities.

### NGO Capacity Building Plan and Workforce Development Plan

The focus of the capacity building plans to support *Keep Them Safe* is on improving outcomes for children and families by building partnerships between Government and the NGO sector, changing the culture of service delivery, improving the skills of the workforce and linking services to local communities.

These Plans will cover NGOs involved in the delivery of services and supports to children and their families. The majority of these NGOs will be funded through programs administered by the Department of Human Services, although some will be funded by NSW Health and the Department of Education and Training. Mainly these are services that focus on early intervention and prevention for children and families, specialist child protection services, and other support services such as domestic and family violence services, drug alcohol and mental health services and crisis accommodation and support. It is not expected that the strategy will extend to build the capacity of services where there are already actions in place as part of the NSW or national policy agenda, for example, child care services, independent schools and disability services, although some of these service may be including in future training and change management strategies specific to KTS.

They will also cover:

- NGOs that are ultimately engaged to deliver, or support the referral and service delivery functions of, the new Family Referral Services which are being trialled by NSW Health
- the majority of Aboriginal specific NGO service providers in NSW on the basis that there is a limited number of such organisations, and that indigenous NGOs that are not currently involved in providing services to children and families may have a role in the future.

Part of the project will involve defining the NGO groups against actions in the Plan.

The **NGO Capacity Building plan** will describe how the Government will work with the NGO sector to strengthen and build its capacity to take on an expanded or changed role in service delivery. The plan sits along side and builds on existing programs such as those major investments underway under the NSW State Plan and other sector specific policies to enhance the overall efficiency of the NGO



sector. This includes activities to reduce the regulatory burden of funding administration arrangements, and other major reforms underway in NSW that involve sector support, for example disability and community housing.

Developed in conjunction with the NGO Capacity Building plan, the **Workforce Development plan** will include aspects of public sector workforce development, with a focus on areas of joint activity and a consistent framework for workforce planning specific to KTS results (the majority of actions on workforce development in NSW Government agencies will be set out in agency specific plans).

Recognising the centrality of workforce development to the broader plan for NGO capacity development, and hence the strong alignment between the two plans, the two have been integrated into a single plan as presented in this discussion paper.

## Context

### *National context*

#### **Council of Australian Governments (COAG) – Protecting Children is Everyone’s Business**

In 2009, The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed that Australia needed a shared platform for change in the child services sector in order to advance a consistent agenda of reform across jurisdictions, with States and Territories sharing a common objective. As a result, the *Protecting Children is Everyone’s Business: the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children* was launched. The Framework is an articulation of a coherent and unified national approach to child protection in Australia.

The National Framework is a 12-year overarching strategic framework for reform supported by rolling triennial action plans identifying specific actions, responsibilities and timeframes for implementation by the individual States and Territories.

It is with reference to this overarching context of change that New South Wales’ is implementing its own reform agenda, including the implementation of the *Keep Them Safe* plan.

#### **COAG - National Indigenous Reform Agreement**

In 2007-08, COAG committed to Close the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage by improving outcomes for Indigenous Australians in the areas of life expectancy, health, education and employment.

The COAG National Indigenous Reform Agreement<sup>8</sup>:

- commits all jurisdictions to achieving the Closing the Gap targets of:
  - closing the gap in life expectancy within a generation
  - halving the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade
  - ensuring all Indigenous four years olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years
  - halving the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade
  - halving the gap for Indigenous students in year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020

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<sup>8</sup> Council of Australian Governments *Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) on Federal Financial Relations Schedule F: National Indigenous Reform Agreement*. 2009. Available at [http://www.coag.gov.au/intergov\\_agreements/federal\\_financial\\_relations/docs/IGA\\_FFR\\_ScheduleF\\_National\\_Indigenous\\_Reform\\_Agreement.rtf](http://www.coag.gov.au/intergov_agreements/federal_financial_relations/docs/IGA_FFR_ScheduleF_National_Indigenous_Reform_Agreement.rtf)

- halving the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade.
- defines responsibilities and promotes accountability amongst governments
- provides a roadmap for future action
- notes the significant funding provided through Indigenous-specific National Partnerships to assist in meeting the targets
- links to other National Agreements and National Partnerships which include elements that will address the targets.

COAG recognises that reducing Indigenous disadvantage will require a long-term and integrated approach. Specifically, reforms will see efforts to reduce disadvantage directed across a number of agreed “building blocks”:

- Early Childhood
- Schooling
- Health
- Economic Participation
- Healthy Homes
- Safe Communities
- Governance and Leadership.

The Urban and Regional Strategy, an element of the National Indigenous Reform Agreement, commits Governments to a more transparent and systematic approach to coordinating services to address Indigenous disadvantage by coordinating the delivery of services to Aboriginals across health, housing, early childhood development, education and employment. It also recognises the importance of working in partnership with Aboriginal people to ensure that Government investments:

- deliver effective and accessible services that are taken up by Indigenous people in urban and regional locations
- deliver culturally competent services that achieve good outcomes for Indigenous Australians
- maximise linkages between Aboriginal-specific and mainstream services
- deliver service models that respond to high levels of mobility amongst Indigenous Australians.

It also commits Governments to adopting local need/place-based approaches to services, and to strengthening individual, family and community wellbeing and capacity in urban and regional locations as a crucial means for developing responses to local needs which are driven by both the community and government, and to monitoring of key outcomes.

Together, *Protecting Children is Everyone's Business* and *Closing the Gap* provide a broader context for the implementation of the *Keep Them Safe* action plan within NSW, and some key issues for consideration.

## NSW context

### NSW State Plan

Released in 2006, the *NSW State Plan*<sup>9</sup> commits the NSW Government to creating a fairer society and overcoming disadvantage for the most vulnerable members of our community. Among the specific areas for focus are:

- reducing rates of child abuse and neglect
- strengthening Aboriginal communities through improving health and educational outcomes for Aboriginal people.

A key feature of the *NSW State Plan* is that it articulates not only what the Government role will be but also sets targets for the whole community, and emphasises the role of the community in assisting to achieve these targets.

### Wood Report

The Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in New South Wales was established on 14 November 2007. The Hon James Wood AO QC conducted the inquiry to determine what changes within the child protection system were required to improve outcomes for the children of New South Wales.

The Wood Report was released in November 2008 contained 111 wide-ranging recommendations, including the implementation of numerous prevention and early intervention measures. The recommendations – formulated to improve systems, reporting arrangements, resources and the statutory framework for child protection in the state – were aimed at reducing the burden on the statutory child protection system and provide more timely and effective responses for children and their families.

The Wood report provided several recommendations in relation to the workforce capacity of the (then) Department of Community Services (DoCS) and the need for increased participation and cooperation between agencies and non-government organisations (NGOs). Wood emphasised the need for cultural change, minimum qualifications/experience requirements and increased administrative support within government agencies.

The Report also suggested that NGOs and state agencies should be funded to deliver integrated case management for families as well as recommending the extension of prevention and early intervention programs including initiatives such as free early childhood education for low-income families, home visiting programs,

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<sup>9</sup> NSW Government. *NSW State Plan*. Available at <http://www.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/pdfs/stateplan/Chapter4%20-%20Fairness%20and%20Opportunity.pdf>

educational support for children in alternative care and the Brighter Futures program.

### Keep Them Safe

*Keep Them Safe* was launched on 3 March 2009 in response to the Wood Report which identified that the key to reducing risks for children is to get services to more children and families and to get them there sooner. It was held that this would require changes to legislation, services and culture, with sufficient time allowed for new ways of working to be established.<sup>10</sup>

\$750 million has been allocated by the NSW Government to implement *Keep Them Safe*. A significant proportion of that funding was been allocated for services that are expected to be mainly delivered by NGOs, reflecting the additional involvement and responsibilities they will assume under *Keep Them Safe* as discussed above.

Key reforms contained within the NSW Government action plan include:

- establishing Child Wellbeing Units in NSW Health, NSW Police, the Department of Education and Training, and Department of Human Service (Housing, Ageing, Disability and Home Care and Juvenile Justice), to advise mandatory reporters within these agencies on the new statutory reporting threshold of 'risk of significant harm' and to assist in responding to matters which do not meet this criteria
- expanded services and a focus on prevention and early intervention, including:
  - expanding the *Brighter Futures* early intervention program to support vulnerable families with children aged 0-8 years by providing access to a range of services, including quality child care, case management, parenting program and home visiting
  - extending intensive family preservation services to support families whose children are at risk of entering out-of-home care
  - continuing to trial Sustained Health Home Visiting, with further expansion to be considered in 2010, which employs specialist child and family health nurses to work intensively with high needs families in pregnancy and during the first two years of a child's life
  - employing additional Home School Liaison Officers to work with families where there are concerns about non-attendance at school.
- a new partnership with, and an enhanced role for, the non-government sector, including:
  - funding to establish new Family Referral Services to improve access to services for children and families.

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<sup>10</sup> NSW Department of Human Services. *Keep Them Safe: A Shared Approach to Child Wellbeing 2009-2014*. March 2009. NSW Government. Available at [http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/what\\_is\\_keep\\_them\\_safe\\_a\\_shared\\_approach\\_to\\_child\\_wellbeing/principles\\_supporting\\_Keep\\_Them\\_Safe](http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/what_is_keep_them_safe_a_shared_approach_to_child_wellbeing/principles_supporting_Keep_Them_Safe)

- enhancing the role of the NGO sector in the delivery of OOHC and the *Brighter Futures* early intervention program
- investing in capacity building and reform of funding arrangements. In particular, priority work will be undertaken with Aboriginal organisations to build their capacity to play an enhanced role in the provision of out-of-home care and other services.

### *Implications*

The directions and priorities contained within these policies foreshadow a significant change in the way supports and services for children, young people and families in NSW will be delivered. As such, they provide the context for the development of the plans to strengthen the capacity of the NGO sector and the workforce across agencies with primary responsibility for improving outcomes for children and families.

## Principles supporting Keep Them Safe

Justice Wood set out eight principles in the final report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW. These principles underpin the *Keep Them Safe* initiative. They are:

- Child protection is the collective responsibility of the whole of government and the community.
- Primary responsibility for rearing and supporting children should rest with families and communities, with government providing support where it is needed, either directly or through the funded non-government sector.
- The child protection system should be child-focused, with the safety, welfare and wellbeing of the child or young person being of paramount concern, while recognising that supporting parents is usually in the best interests of the child or young person.
- Positive outcomes for children and families are achieved through development of a relationship with the family that recognises their strengths and their needs.
- Child safety, attachment, wellbeing and permanency should guide child protection practice.
- Support services should be available to ensure that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young persons are safe and connected to family, community and culture.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should participate in decision making concerning the care and protection of their children and young persons with as much self-determination as possible, and steps should be taken to empower local communities to that end.
- Assessments and interventions should be evidence based, monitored and evaluated<sup>11</sup>.

Building the capacity of the NGO sector will assist the sector in delivering a range of services aligned to the above key principles.

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<sup>11</sup> NSW Department of Human Services. *Keep Them Safe: A Shared Approach to Child Wellbeing 2009-2014*. March 2009. NSW Government. Available at [http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/what\\_is\\_keep\\_them\\_safe\\_a\\_shared\\_approach\\_to\\_child\\_wellbeing/principles\\_supporting\\_Keep\\_Them\\_Safe](http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/what_is_keep_them_safe_a_shared_approach_to_child_wellbeing/principles_supporting_Keep_Them_Safe)

## Capacity building framework

The following diagram presents an overview of the framework for NGO sector capacity building. It considers the “sector” to comprise all of the NGO organisations that have a key role to play in supporting children, young people, families and communities in order to ensure that children and young people are healthy, happy and safe. It is not expected that the strategy will extend to build the capacity of services where there are already actions in place as part of the NSW or national policy agenda, for example, child care services, independent schools and disability services, although some of these service may be including in future training and change management strategies specific to KTS.

The framework:

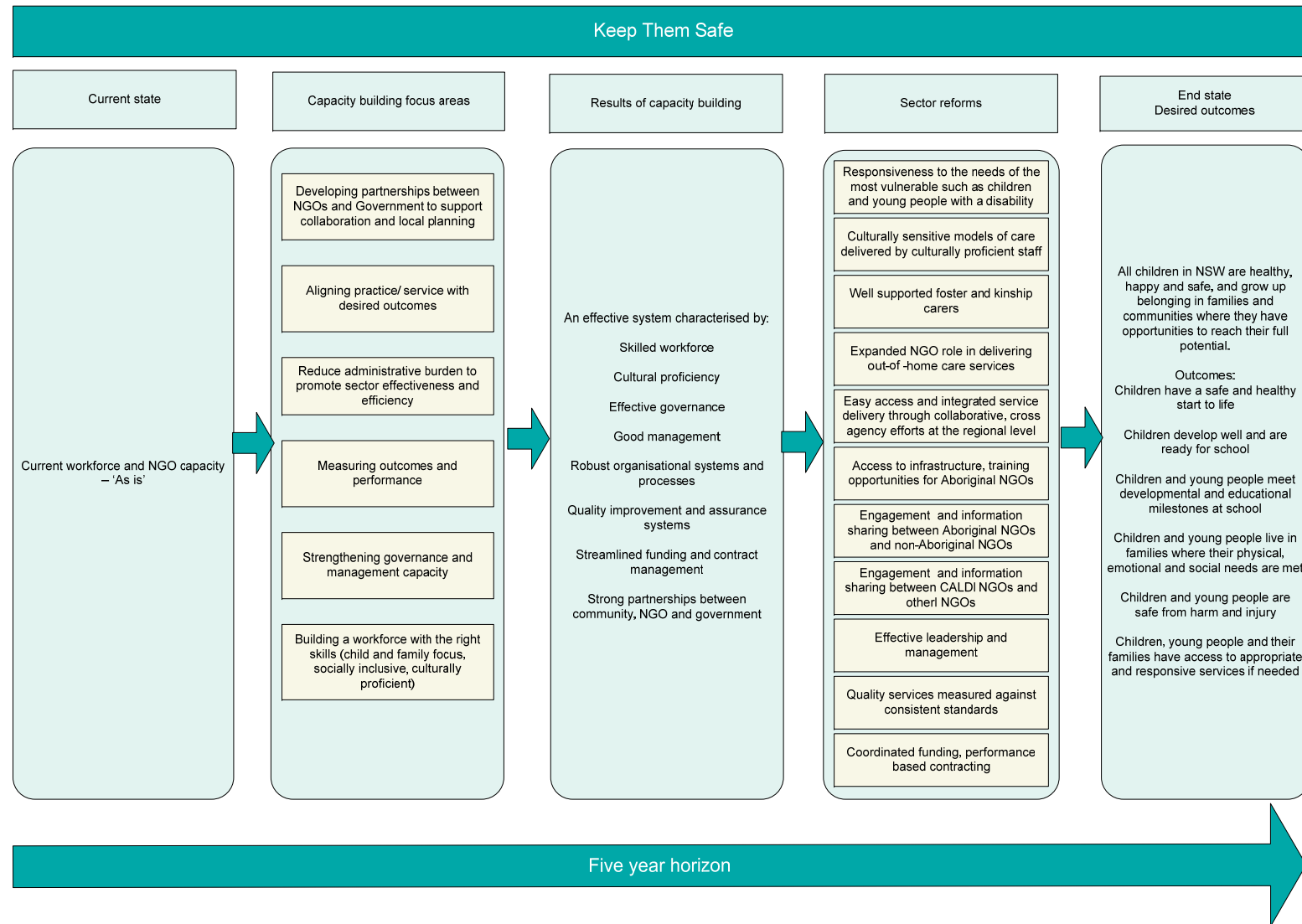
- identifies six focus areas for strengthening and building sector capacity
- describes the characteristics of the system that will result from the capacity building activities and position it to take an expanded role in delivering supports and services to children, young people, families and communities and to do so in new ways
- identifies the sector reforms that are required to better position NGOs to deliver family and community services in line with *Keep Them Safe*
- describes the desired outcomes from the sector reforms and strengthened partnership between Government and NGOs.

The areas for focus for capacity building are:

- 1 Developing partnerships between NGOs and Government to support collaboration and planning
- 2 Aligning practice and services to outcomes
- 3 Reducing administrative burden to promote sector effectiveness and efficiency
- 4 Measuring outcomes and performance
- 5 Strengthening governance, management and leadership capacity
- 6 Building a workforce with the right skills.

These areas of focus are consistent with other NGO capacity building approaches being implemented within NSW human services e.g. disability, community services and community housing, and will ensure that strategies to strengthen the capacity of organisations and the sector as whole in relation to *Keep Them Safe* will build on rather than duplicate existing or planned strategies in those segments of the sector. This is important for maximising the benefit to NGOs (particularly those operating across segments) while minimising inefficiency and unnecessary duplication for Government.

Figure 2 NGO capacity building framework



Strengthening the capacity of NGOs, as stated previously, is intended to ensure that they are efficient, effective and sustainable over the long term as well as being responsive to change, flexible, and innovative. Capacity building should therefore enable NGOs to respond to a range of reforms now and into the future.

In terms of positioning the NGO sector to take an expanded role in the delivery of services to children, young people and families and to work in partnership with Government to achieve better outcomes for children, the areas for focus should be seen as parts of a holistic and integrated approach. Not all of the areas for focus have a direct relationship to supporting the reforms envisaged under *Keep Them Safe*, but taken together they should enable the sector to take on the expanded role in service delivery, and to implement new approaches to achieve the desired outcomes.

The table below shows the strength of the relationship between the areas for focus and the specific NGO sector reforms described in *Keep Them Safe*.

*Figure 3 Relationship between capacity building focus areas and reforms outlined in Keep Them Safe*

Sector reforms	Areas for capacity building focus					
	Developing partnerships to support collaboration and planning	Aligning practice and service to outcomes	Reducing administrative burden to promote sector effectiveness and efficiency	Measuring outcomes and performance	Strengthening governance, management and leadership capacity	Building a skilled workforce
Responsiveness to the needs of the most vulnerable children and young people	✓✓	✓✓✓		✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Culturally sensitive models delivered by culturally proficient staff		✓✓✓			✓	✓✓✓
Well supported foster and kinship carers	✓✓	✓✓✓				✓✓✓
Expanded NGO role in delivery out of home care services	✓✓	✓✓✓			✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Easy access and integrated service delivery through collaborative, cross agency efforts at the regional level	✓✓✓	✓✓✓			✓✓	✓
Access to infrastructure, training opportunities for Aboriginal NGOs	✓✓✓					✓✓✓
Engagement and information sharing between Aboriginal NGOs and non-Aboriginal NGOs	✓✓✓	✓✓✓			✓✓	✓✓
Engagement and information sharing between CALD NGOs and other NGOs	✓✓✓	✓✓✓			✓✓	✓✓
Effective leadership and management			✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Quality services measured against consistent standards	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓
Coordinated funding, performance based contracting		✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓

Key:    ✓✓✓ Very strong/direct relationship                  ✓✓ Strong relationship                  ✓ Supporting/indirect relationship

## Focus Area 1: Developing partnerships between NGOs and Government to support collaboration and local planning

*Keep Them Safe* reshapes the way family and community services are delivered in NSW, sharing responsibility across government agencies and NGOs. Building a stronger partnership between government and NGOs is fundamental to changing the way children, young people and families are supported.

The Wood Report and *Keep Them Safe* both highlight the importance of partnerships between Government and NGOs and the need to develop and deliver “joined up” or collaborative responses to better support children, young people and their families. They also recognise the critical importance of delivering services as close as possible to where children and families live.

Across NSW human services, there are numerous examples of Government agencies and NGOs working together to plan, deliver and provide supports and services. *Keep Them Safe* recognises the need to build on this foundation and establish trusting partnerships so that children, young people and families can be supported by an integrated system that works together to ensure that children are safe and well.

The partnership arrangements described in *Keep Them Safe* are multifaceted and multi-layered. They include:

- **partnerships between NGO service providers** – to provide a basis for joint planning and delivery of supports and services to both individuals and target groups, achieving efficiencies within the system through sharing of resources (including sharing/amalgamating common “back office” functions) and maximising outcomes for children and families
- **partnerships between Aboriginal NGOs and non-Aboriginal NGOs** - to support information sharing and build the capacity of Aboriginal NGOs, while also providing a basis for building greater cultural competency among non-Aboriginal NGOs
- **partnerships between NGO services, peaks and Government agencies** – to ensure effective planning and resource allocation at the local level that ensures that resources are available for services and supports where they are needed most, and make the best use of limited resources
- **partnerships between Government agencies** – to work together to support the delivery of a range of integrated supports and services, overcome traditional “silos” of funding, policy and service delivery, minimise the administrative burden for NGO service providers, and maximise the return for public investment by sharing resources and reducing duplication of expenditure.

Therefore, the focus of capacity building to enable the development of effective partnerships needs to address each of these levels of partnership.

Potential strategies to support the implementation of *Keep Them Safe* include:

- continuing to strengthen the cross-Government agency arrangements to deliver key parts of the reform
- establishing local planning mechanism to bring together Government agencies and NGOs
- establishing mechanisms at the local and regional level to bring together Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal NGOs to share information and build additional capacity within Aboriginal NGOs
- establishing mechanisms at the local and regional level to bring together CALD and other NGOs to share information and build additional capacity within CALD NGOs
- supporting the development of collaboration and partnerships between NGOs to support the development of innovative, flexible and integrated services
- supporting NGOs to implement collaborative strategies and partnerships to improve efficiency.

*Questions to guide consultation*

- To what extent will these strategies strengthen the development of partnerships to support the implementation of *Keep Them Safe*?
- How can a meaningful partnership between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal NGOs be developed?
- What is already occurring?
- What else is needed?

## Focus Area 2: Aligning practice and services to achieve desired outcomes

*Keep Them Safe* recognises that supporting children and their families within the community and working to prevent the need for children to enter the child protection system is essential. To this end, *Keep Them Safe* signals a number of reforms that will require NGOs to review and where necessary realign their practices, service models and services so that they are better able to deliver the outcomes articulated in *Keep Them Safe*.

Strengthening capacity in this area aims to support NGOs to:

- align service delivery with Government priorities, and deliver the right mix of services in the right locations
- promote innovation and the development of responsive, child and family centred services and support models, including:
  - delivering more than one service type
  - developing and delivering culturally sensitive models of care to Aboriginal communities
  - developing and delivering culturally sensitive models of care to CALD communities including emerging refugee communities
  - developing and implementing a range of care options, including therapeutic foster care, for children and young people and parents with physical and/or intellectual disability person-centred – these should be child and family centred, responsive to the needs and goals of the individuals, and aim to promote community inclusion
  - developing and implementing a range of care options, including therapeutic foster care, that is available for children and young people with challenging behaviours (and support carers)
  - increase the focus on early intervention with a focus on transition points for children and young people
- increase the focus on delivering early intervention and prevention programs for regional Aboriginal communities
- expand the range and number of family preservation services available
- take an expanded role in delivering the Intensive Family Based Service (piloted by Community Services) to additional Aboriginal families
- take an expanded role in the delivery of out of home care services
- revise and expand training for foster and kinship carers

- build community capacity to support children, young and families.

Ensuring that the NGO workforce is appropriately skilled to deliver services that are child and family centred, have a prevention and early intervention focus, and are developed and delivered in culturally appropriate ways will be a key plank in strengthening the capacity of NGOs to review existing practices and models and develop and implement new approaches where required.

Other strategies to strengthen the capacity of NGOs to align practice and service models with the requirements of *Keep Them Safe* include:

- establishing a research program and information sharing mechanism to build an evidence base to support the development of models to improve supports for:
  - culturally appropriate service models for Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities
  - children, young people and parents with a disability
  - children and young people with challenging behaviours and their families
  - children, young people, and families from CALD communities including emerging refugee communities
  - foster carers and kinship carers.
- developing a cross-agency policy framework including requirements and templates to guide the efforts of organisations
- developing and disseminating resources and training to assist service providers to evaluate and enhance their ability to reconfigure their supports and practices to provide more supports and services
- incentivising the NGO sector to develop innovative approaches to strengthening families and delivering prevention and early intervention programs, including delivering more than one service type
- developing a cross agency approach to building the capacity of Aboriginal NGOs
- supporting NGOs to build capacity within the community to support children, young people and families
- developing culturally appropriate and targeted approaches to supporting Aboriginal NGOs to build capacity within Aboriginal communities to support children, young people and families in culturally appropriate ways.

#### *Questions to guide consultation*

- To what extent will these strategies strengthen the capacity of NGOs to realign practices and services as required by *Keep Them Safe*?
- What is already occurring?
- What else is needed?

## Focus Area 3: Reducing administrative burden to promote sector effectiveness and efficiency

Currently, *Keep Them Safe* organisations may receive funding from a range of different programs, from a range of different agencies or divisions of the same agency. This means that funding allocation and tendering processes and requirements may be different across programs, divisions, and agencies, requirements of individual contracts may be different, and monitoring and reporting requirements and timeframes may be different. Organisations that have a role to play in implementing *Keep Them Safe* may be subject to a number of different regulations, standards, and policy requirements – not all of which are consistent or aligned across programs, agencies or divisions. For an agency that receives multiple sources of funding, this can amount to significant ‘red tape’ and administrative burden.

Further, the focus of funding approaches and contracts have traditionally been on inputs, although there has been a move in a number of areas towards specifying outputs (such as in disability services). While outcomes focused performance based contracting has been implemented in some areas, it is not yet universal across all funding contracts.

Government actions to realign and refocussing funding and contracting approaches will indirectly build capacity of NGOs by reducing the administrative burden of many organisations receiving multiple funding sources who are faced with disparate contracting and funding models and unaligned monitoring and reporting regimes. Further, changing the focus of contracting towards outcomes and performance reinforces other areas of focus for capacity building – and in particular the focus on measuring outcomes and performance and building a culture of continuous improvement – further increasing NGO capacity to deliver high quality services for children and families, as well as providing government with the mechanisms to facilitate this as well as the information to show that this is being achieved.

The NSW Government is already implementing a range of actions arising from a review of red tape to reduce the administrative burden of contracting, monitoring and reporting. Additionally, funding reform is already a focus for the newly established DHS, and over time this is likely to facilitate the development of a single DHS ‘contract’ and a single reporting regime across programs and divisions.

Further, aligning regulation, standards, and policy requirements where feasible or at least introducing recognition of compliance and accreditation across different regulation, standards or policy requirements, will also reduce red tape and administrative burden, and help create an environment focussed on performance rather than compliance.

Activities to improve funding administration practices, to reduce red tape and integrate funding policy across key funding agencies will apply across all policy and service delivery types, including services supporting children at risk and their

families, This section of the capacity building plan seeks to identify strategies that might be specific to the delivery of *Keep Them Safe*. Strategies might include:

- establishing common standards and accountabilities for delivery of services to children at risk and their families linked to overall *Keep Them Safe* results
- introducing performance based contracting and monitoring
- providing supports and guidance to NGOs to meet standards.

*Questions to guide consultation*

- What types of funding strategies are particularly needed to improve the contracting arrangements for NGOs to deliver on *Keep Them Safe*?
- What other strategies or initiatives are in place?
- What else is needed?

## Focus Area 4: Measuring outcomes and performance

High-performing organisations are critical to achieving the *Keep Them Safe* desired outcomes, and for maximising the benefit of *Keep Them Safe* for children and families in NSW. High-performing organisations are those which are:

- effective, delivering quality services that achieve the desired outcomes for children and families
- efficient, utilising available resources for maximum benefit and delivering value-for-money by utilising the limited resources available for maximum client benefit
- innovative, willing to take risks and try new methods of service delivery with confidence.

It is important to build the capacity of NGOs to measure and monitor outcomes and performance so that they can be 'high-performing' organisations. Building this capacity will result in:

- organisations, and the sector as a whole, that have a greater focus on the desired *Keep Them Safe* outcomes, and regularly monitor the impact and effectiveness of their interventions on children and families – utilising specific, measurable outcome indicators
- recognition of monitoring or accreditation results from other recognised systems or jurisdictions
- organisations that regularly monitor and report on their operational performance against key performance indicators relevant for *Keep Them Safe*, and use this information to improve their operational performance
- organisations that report on their *Keep Them Safe* performance periodically, and Government that undertakes external monitoring and review of organisations' *Keep Them Safe* performance, which does not place undue administrative burden on organisations and provides useful information and feedback to inform change and improvement
- simple, robust processes, systems and tools in place for monitoring and measuring performance at an organisational level, and for providing information and feedback to inform performance improvement.

Strategies to strengthen the performance of NGOs include:

- regular monitoring of outcomes and effectiveness based on a key set of *Keep Them Safe* outcome indicators – applicable at a whole-of-strategy level and at an organisational level
- determining an appropriate external *Keep Them Safe* monitoring and review cycle for examining the performance of organisations' *Keep Them Safe* performance.

- establishing simple, robust processes, systems and tools for monitoring and measuring performance
- developing a consistent cross-agency approach to incentives and sanctions applied on the basis of performance.

*Questions to guide consultation*

- To what extent will these strategies strengthen the capacity of NGOs to measure and improve performance as organisations and in respect to delivering on the outcomes required by *Keep Them Safe*?
- What is already occurring?
- What else is needed

## Focus Area 5: Strengthening governance, management and leadership

Effective governance and management of non-government organisations (NGOs) is crucial to ensuring a responsive and robust service system that achieves positive outcomes for children and families. Members of Boards or Management Committees and senior operational managers require a range of skills to govern and operate organisations so that they are high performing i.e. effective, efficient and outcome orientated. These skills include:

- strategic thinking
- leadership
- effective strategic and corporate planning
- well-developed financial management
- human resource management capacity
- risk management.

There is an increasing recognition within contemporary human services of the benefits that can be realised from including service users in corporate governance, and the contribution that they can make to the effectiveness of organisations. Engaging service users in organisational decision-making can strengthen an organisation's cultural proficiency, ability to design and deliver innovative programs that are responsive to the needs and preferences of their target groups, and ensure an outcomes focus. This is particularly important in Aboriginal organisations and organisations working with people from other culturally and linguistic diverse communities.

In addition to effective governance and management, sector leaders have an important role in facilitating change, creating a new culture and fostering innovative approaches to service delivery. Sector leaders do not necessarily hold formal governance or management positions, but are recognised by colleagues as being influential within their sphere. Identifying and fostering the skills of leaders, including developing their capacity as "change champions", will assist individual organisations and the broader human services sector to adopt new approaches to supporting vulnerable children, young people and families.

Implementing a range of activities to strengthen governance, leadership and management within NGOs will result in:

- Boards/Management Committees that are skilled in corporate governance and strategic leadership, and understand the directions the provision of services to children and families described in Keep Them Safe
- managers who are skilled in business management and are able to operate effective, efficient and responsive services

- the development of leaders from within the sector
- inclusive practices that promote the engagement of service users in decision-making and shaping of services that are responsive, culturally proficient and outcome focussed.

While there are a number of programs to enhance governance and management capability in place, consolidating these into a single strategy to support all NGOs providing services to children, young people and families will reduce duplication and maximise return on investment, as well as providing a platform for a potential whole of human services NGO governance building approach. An integrated approach, with development opportunities available to NGOs from across human services sectors, can also promote networking and collaboration between organisations at the local level.

The strategy could include:

- developing and implementing a governance capacity building plan that will ensure that Boards/Management Committees are skilled in corporate governance and strategic leadership, and understand the directions the provision of services to children and families described in *Keep Them Safe*. The plan may include:
  - developing and distributing a good governance manual
  - developing resources to ensure effective Board induction processes
  - providing targeted training based on assessed need
  - supporting Board to Board networking
  - conducting industry workshops
  - establishing a mentoring program
- developing and implementing a program of targeted training and support for senior managers of Human Services NGOs with a particular focus on building capacity to implement change in response to the directions for sector reform outlined in *Keep Them Safe*. Areas for focus should include:
  - business planning and operation within a changing policy context
  - ensuring that policies and processes are consistent with the principles of child and family centred practice (person-centred approaches)
  - incorporating *Keep Them Safe* - related quality outcomes and measurement into current systems
  - workforce management and development
  - leading and managing change – cultural, service delivery
  - strengthening business systems to maximise efficiency and effectiveness – finance, payroll, HR, client management

- reconciling funding and service delivery
- risk-based funding and accountability
- developing a range of mechanisms to equip the leaders of organisations, particularly smaller organisations, with the skills and capacity to be more effective leaders. This may include:
  - formal training and education
  - mentoring (for example, larger organisation CEOs supporting and mentoring leaders of smaller organisations)
  - networking and information sharing through electronic forums (hosted on HSNET) can be established to promote network and mentoring and facilitate transfer of skills and ideas. These could operate at a local or regional level
  - in consultation with Aboriginal Leaders and organisations, develop and implement culturally proficient approaches to building further leadership capacity within Aboriginal NGOs
- developing inclusive practices that promote the engagement of service users in decision-making and shaping of services that are responsive, culturally proficient and outcome focussed.

*Questions to guide consultation*

- To what extent will these strategies strengthen the governance, management and leadership within NGOs?
- What is already occurring?
- What else is needed?

## Focus Area 6: Building a workforce with the right skills

For the purpose of this plan, workforce development is considered a component of wider sector capacity building. It is highlighted that the quality of the workforce to deliver a broader range and additional quantum of services and achieve desired KTS outcomes, relies not only on workforce development strategies identified but in combination with broader sector change (e.g. the NGO capacity building plan). Workforce development can be seen as a combination of managing the size and composition of the workforce, retaining and managing that workforce and skilling that workforce<sup>12</sup>.

The aim of workforce development activities is to build a workforce of people with the knowledge, skills and competencies, to be able to work in a diverse range of settings, and to deliver the range of programs required from universal to tertiary services. Critical to delivering KTS will be ensuring that agencies work together to better share information, resources and decision making processes and to develop open and genuine partnerships with NGOs. Importantly, progress on workforce development should assist with meeting current priorities (as reflected by the outcomes of KTS) as well as position the workforce for future change and the capacity and capability to respond.

As noted in the forward, it is recognised that there is a strong intersection between the NGO Capacity Building Plan and this sector Workforce Development Plan. As a result the Areas for focus and the NGO Capacity building framework from the NGO Capacity Building Plan are presented below, followed by the Workforce Development Framework and the five components of workforce development.

The relationship and alignment between workforce development strategies and wider sector capacity building strategies will be further explored with key agencies and NGO representative groups via consultation – to determine the most appropriate approach to present these strategies to support collaborative service delivery and cross sector engagement.

### ***Principles for workforce development***

Principles of workforce development have been articulated to guide the implementation of the workforce development framework (described below). The principles seek to support joint areas of action across Government and the NGO sector, and to support inclusion of common elements in agency workforce development plans to support KTS implementation (recognising that agencies will continue to move forward with major workforce development activities for their own staff). It is recommended that agencies and NGOs consider the principles against each element of the workforce development framework – to confirm that the principles are reflected in workforce development strategies.

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<sup>12</sup> Carson, E et al ( 2007). *Careers At the Coal-Face? Community Services in South Australia: Workforce Development*. University of South Australia and SACOSS, in The Council of Social Services New South Wales (NCOSS) 2007 Models of workforce development  
<http://ncoss.org.au/projects/workforce/workforce-development-models.pdf> - viewed December 2009

The principles are:

- Shared approach to service delivery – consider opportunities for supporting a shared approach to service delivery by collaborating on workforce development strategies – including exploring opportunities for joint activities across the elements described in the workforce development framework (e.g. joint training, or recruitment activities)
- Collaboration and partnership – consider explicit measures to support and enhance joint working by incorporating shared approaches and activities (e.g. implement strategies to support placements across agencies, develop common approaches to caseworker supervision)
- Aboriginal cultural proficiency - explicit consideration and articulation of workforce development strategies to build cultural competency of staff in supporting Aboriginal children and their families
- Culturally and Linguistically diverse cultural proficiency - explicit consideration and articulation of workforce development strategies to build cultural competency of staff in supporting Culturally and Linguistically Diverse children and their families
- Rural and remote area focus - explicit consideration and articulation of rural/ remote areas in workforce development (including consideration of strategies that focus on attracting and retaining skilled staff).

### ***Workforce development framework***

The workforce development framework described below, highlights the components of workforce development identified for inclusion in the five year plan. Each component is described in further detail in the following sections. The workforce development framework seeks to support the sector change which includes enhancement and expansion of services and the roles of agencies and NGOs. For example the framework has been developed with consideration for needs of NGOs to employ additional staff and to accommodate the progressive transition of early intervention and OOHHC casework to the NGOs.

The framework reflects the importance of strategies for:

- 1 workforce planning
- 2 recruitment and retention (with particular emphasis on identifying strategies for use in regional and remote areas)
- 3 Aboriginal workforce and building the cultural proficiency of all staff in supporting Aboriginal children and their families
- 4 building the proficiency of all staff to support culturally and linguistically diverse children and their families
- 5 developing a culture of continuous learning
- 6 to support and encourage partnering to reflect the importance of these initiatives to facilitate broader sector collaborative service delivery.

Identification of joint training opportunities across the sector for agencies and NGOs will assist to support partnering and to support collaborative service delivery (see

section below). The framework is also designed to guide public sector KTS workforce development to ensure consistency across NSW Government.

### ***Shared approach***

*Keep Them Safe* describes a move towards shared responsibility for care and protection of children and young people, and an increased focus on earlier intervention. This move can be facilitated through shared practice, shared training and a shared approach to coordinated service delivery.

There is opportunity for sector participation in shared workforce development and sharing of good practice. This is likely to include implementation of integrated sector-wide initiatives, based on existing practice within a sub-segment of the sector. As with other capacity building strategies identified, there is the opportunity to establish sector-wide governance arrangements to lead and monitor initiatives. It is anticipated that through the process of pursuing these combined strategies, there will be the opportunity to identify strategic directions of agencies and NGOs for information sharing across the sector, and working as part of a broad sector framework for delivery child and family services.

Identified existing initiatives are presented in the table below. It is anticipated that consultation with the sector will identify a range of additional initiatives and explore the opportunity for wider use and adoption of initiatives by the sector and for this to be reflected in the final plan accordingly.

Table 1: Workforce development framework

Proposed element	Planning	Recruitment & retention	Aboriginal workforce/ Aboriginal cultural proficiency	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse proficiency	Culture of continuous learning	Partnering
Descriptor	Workforce profiling, tools and guidelines to support consistent, quality planning	Including focus on minimum qualifications, and strategies targeting rural and remote areas	Aboriginal employment strategies and non-Aboriginal staff cultural proficiencies	Proficiency to deliver and support culturally and linguistically diverse children and their communities	supervision, professional development, further qualifications.	skills, networks, ongoing support to encourage collaborative service delivery – shared practice, shared training
Target	All workers involved in delivery of services to families and children. Consider frontline, management and Board (NGO). [excludes child care and independent schools]					
Supporting principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared approach to service delivery – consider opportunities for supporting a shared approach to service delivery by collaborating on workforce development strategies – including exploring opportunities for joint activities across the elements described in the workforce development framework (e.g. joint training, or recruitment activities, embedding shared approach to service delivery – i.e. regional networks).</li> <li>• Collaboration and partnership – consider explicit measures to support and enhance joint working by incorporating shared approaches and activities (e.g. implement strategies to support placements across agencies, enhanced networking, develop common approaches to caseworker supervision)</li> <li>• Aboriginal cultural proficiency - explicit consideration and articulation of workforce development strategies to build cultural competency of staff in supporting Aboriginal children and their families</li> <li>• Culturally and Linguistically diverse cultural proficiency - explicit consideration and articulation of workforce development strategies to build cultural competency of staff in supporting Culturally and Linguistically Diverse children and their families</li> <li>• Rural and remote area focus - explicit consideration and articulation of rural/ remote areas in workforce development (including consideration of strategies that focus on attracting and retaining skilled staff).</li> </ul>					
Common themes	Agency and NGO workforce intersection Relationship + alignment between workforce development and sector capacity building strategies					

### ***Component 1: Planning***

This component of workforce development seeks to reflect the importance of workforce planning to subsequent strategies that address particular aspects of workforce development (e.g. recruitment & retention). In addition to direct workforce profiling and analysis, this component includes tools and guidelines to support effective workforce planning activities – and encourage common approaches to workforce planning. It is anticipated that during further consultation with the sector, additional strategies will be identified, and opportunities for sharing of tools and guidance materials. These may include strategies to:

- integrate planning with sector partners including Aboriginal community/stakeholder engagement practices
- allow for regional planning for Aboriginal workforce to recognise capabilities and need for local development initiatives
- identify rural and remote specific planning requirements.

#### *Questions to guide consultation*

- 1 To what extent will these strategies strengthen the development of partnerships and a shared approach to service delivery to support the implementation of KTS?
- 2 What is already occurring?
- 3 What else is needed?

## ***Component 2: Recruitment and retention***

Recruitment and retention are recognised in *Keep Them Safe* as significant issues across the sector. Strategies identified include a focus on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of existing recruitment strategies, and adopting techniques that have proved successful. Rural and remote areas and recruiting and retaining Aboriginal staff are identified as warranting particular attention.

These may include strategies for:

- Temporary and permanent caseworker pool
- Student placement program
- Targeted Aboriginal recruitment and retention strategies
- Short term rural secondment
- Targeted recruitment campaigns – specific advertising campaigns targeting rural locations
- Study assistance program
- NGO strategies to attract and retain experienced staff
- on-going professional training and development standards that are reflected in performance-based contracts

### *Questions to guide consultation*

- 1 To what extent will these strategies strengthen the development of partnerships and a shared approach to service delivery to support the implementation of KTS?
- 2 What is already occurring?
- 3 What else is needed?

### ***Component 3: Aboriginal workforce/ Aboriginal cultural proficiency***

This component of workforce development has two components:

- Strategies to build and maintain a competent and resilient Aboriginal workforce in both the government and nongovernment sectors.
- Developing cultural proficiencies of non-Aboriginal staff when working in partnerships with local Aboriginal staff, children, young people, community organisations and elders.

#### **Strategies to build and maintain a competent and resilient Aboriginal workforce in both the government and nongovernment sectors**

In addition to effective recruitment initiatives, there is a need for strategies to specifically support Aboriginal workers with peer support networks which provide regular opportunities to share experiences, particularly in remote communities. Culturally competent professional supervision and mentoring can seek to address the added challenges workers face of working in their own communities.

In addressing child protection and family violence, workers particularly need to be equipped to address the safety needs of children and respond to the effects of trauma on children, young people, families and communities and to facilitate culturally appropriate approaches to healing.

#### **Developing cultural proficiencies of non-Aboriginal staff when working in partnerships with local Aboriginal staff, children, young people, community organisations and elders**

For example, Housing NSW has Aboriginal Specialist Client Service Officers who provide case coordination for clients with complex needs whose tenancies are at risk, and is committed to the ongoing support of these positions.

Approaches to healing are recognised and the importance of a holistic approach to engaging with and supporting Aboriginal communities.

#### ***Questions to guide consultation***

- 1 To what extent will these strategies strengthen the development of partnerships and a shared approach to service delivery to support the implementation of KTS?
- 2 What is already occurring?
- 3 What else is needed?

### ***Component 4: Culturally and Linguistically Diverse proficiency***

This component of workforce development is supported by a workforce principle: explicit consideration and articulation of workforce development strategies to build cultural competency of staff in supporting Culturally and Linguistically Diverse children and their families.

This component seeks to reinforce the importance of ensuring services are appropriately delivered to families from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. This includes a focus on delivering culturally sensitive models of care to children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Supporting these models of care are strategies that seek to develop and maintain workforce proficiency to deliver services and support culturally and linguistically diverse children and their communities.

#### *Questions to guide consultation*

- 1 To what extent will these strategies strengthen the development of partnerships and a shared approach to service delivery to support the implementation of KTS?
- 2 What is already occurring?
- 3 What else is needed?

### ***Component 5: Continuous learning***

This component of workforce development seeks to identify strategies that support continuous learning of the sector workforce. Key elements include supervision, professional development, and supporting further qualifications. *Keep Them Safe* highlights the opportunity for shared standards, professional training and development focused on collaborative casework and shared responsibility for outcomes– for community services workers across Government and NGO organisations.

As well as joint training for Government and NGO workers, *Keep Them Safe* also highlights merits of specific training packages available to organisations to allow them to do follow-up training. It is envisaged that these training initiatives will help Government and non-government organisations collaborate better in sharing their skills and knowledge so that they can support each other in a spirit of trust when they work together to deliver services. Explicit strategies for partnering and supporting collaborative service delivery are identified in the next section.

#### *Questions to guide consultation*

- 1 To what extent will these strategies strengthen the development of partnerships and a shared approach to service delivery to support the implementation of KTS?
- 2 What is already occurring?
- 3 What else is needed?

## **Component 6: Partnering**

It is recognized that 'Strengthening partnership across the community services sector' is one of the seven elements to *Keep Them Safe*. This component of workforce development seeks to identify explicit strategies for supporting, encouraging and facilitating collaborative service delivery and partnering across the sector. For example, improving interagency work between key Human Service Departments and nongovernment services delivering services to children in OOH (16.10).- Review of key Memoranda of Understanding to include NGOs as partners where delivering OOH services.

*Keep Them Safe* highlights, "Government and NGOs need to better share information, skills and knowledge and need to trust each other. The emphasis of the reforms is on partnership, and it is in this spirit that the Government seeks to work with NGOs to implement a new way of caring for children, young people and their families. Working Together for NSW, the Compact between the NSW Government and the non-government sector, provides an agreed set of principles for this partnership to be developed into the future"<sup>13</sup>.

"The Inquiry concluded that child protection is a collective responsibility of the whole government and of the community with primary responsibility for rearing and supporting children resting with parents, families and communities. Government should only provide support where it is needed, either directly or through the funded non-government sector.

Successful implementation of this vision requires strong cooperation and a partnership approach within government agencies and with the non-government sector. It requires effective coordination, information sharing and referral processes so that children and families who need support are linked to the right services. Critical to the success of this approach is the need to engage and work in partnership with Aboriginal communities to identify the best approaches that will work in local areas and communities"<sup>14</sup>.

Some of the frameworks that aim to improve partnerships with NGOs and the community in general have already been established. The Child Protection Advisory Group, chaired by the Minister for Community Services, has been meeting bimonthly since the report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services was delivered to the Government. The Service System Advisory Group and the Community and Carers Advisory Group began meeting in January 2009, and are chaired by the Director-General of the Department of Human Services. These groups provide a forum for information sharing and the provision of advice to government on aspects of the Keep Them Safe reform agenda.

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<sup>13</sup> Keep Them Safe – A shared approach to child well being – Changing practice and systems p42

<sup>14</sup> Keep Them Safe – A shared approach to child well being – Changing practice and systems p.23

*Questions to guide consultation*

- 1 To what extent will these strategies strengthen the development of partnerships and a shared approach to service delivery to support the implementation of KTS?
- 2 What is already occurring?
- 3 What else is needed?

## Implementation – *for consideration*

Issues for consideration and further exploration to support the implementation of the plan include:

- 1 Need for clarification and communication of the roles of Government, peak bodies and NGOs in sector capacity building.
- 2 *Proposal:* A joint Implementation Committee consisting of representatives from Government agencies and NGO peaks (and organisational reps?) should be established to oversee and coordinate the implementation of the NGO Capacity Building Plan. To promote NGO sector ownership, the Chair of this committee should represent the NGO sector (e.g. NCOSS). Membership should include AbSec and Aboriginal peak bodies.
- 3 *Proposal:* A sub-committee of the Implementation Committee should be established to focus on strengthening the capacity of Aboriginal NGOs. This subcommittee should involve Government agencies, AbSec, Aboriginal peak organisations and Aboriginal community leaders. The focus of this sub-committee should be on
  - empowering Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal NGOs to determine and deliver care and support for Aboriginal children, young people and families
  - supporting the development of local engagement and collaborative arrangements between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organisations to develop the capacity of those Aboriginal organisations and promote information sharing
  - developing and communicating culturally appropriate models of support and care to inform the broader capacity building strategies
  - informing the development of outcome measures and performance indicators.
- 4 Each Government agency should engage with peak bodies and other organisations to encourage and support NGOs, local government and Commonwealth agencies to tailor and implement plans to drive cultural change in line with *Keep Them Safe*.
- 5 Regional planning processes and structures to support implementation.