



Submission to the development of the National Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse

April 2021

National Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse

Overview

- The proposed National Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse (National Strategy) is a critical and pressing initiative. We support the proposed vision, objective and values of the National Strategy and the strategic priority themes for the first National Action Plans.
- Many volunteers interact with and provide services to children, especially those experiencing disadvantage. It is vital that the National Strategy and the National Action Plans explicitly considers volunteer involvement.
- The proposed values complement the principles that underpin the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement¹. These include that volunteers have rights (to work in a safe and supportive environment) and responsibilities (acting responsibly and being accountable for their actions).
- We would like to take this opportunity to raise the importance of further harmonisation of Working with Children Checks across the country.
- The intent to work in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders throughout the life of the National Strategy is welcome. The current redesign of the Australian Government's Volunteer Management Activity (VMA) includes a new focus on working with three 'priority groups' - people with disability, First Nation Peoples and newly arrived migrants. As the National and State and Territory peak volunteering bodies, we are working closely with the Australian Government to progress this objective and will bring our learning to support the delivery of the National Strategy.

Introduction

About the consultation

The National Strategy, which was a key recommendation of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Volume 6, Recommendation 6.1), is designed to provide the framework for a whole-of-nation approach to preventing and responding to child sexual abuse. The current consultation by the National Office for Child Safety is seeking views on the high-level vision, objective and values and on how stakeholders wish to be involved going forward.

Flowing from the 10-year National Strategy (2021-2031) will be four-year actions plans. The First National Action Plan and First Commonwealth Action Plan will cover the period 2021-2025.

About this submission

We welcome the opportunity to provide a submission to the consultation. This submission was drafted by Volunteering Australia in collaboration with the State and Territory peak volunteering bodies.

¹ <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/resources/national-standards-and-supporting-material/>

National Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse

Response to consultation questions

Vision, objective and values²

We support the proposed vision and objective which reflect what success will look like when the National Strategy is successfully implemented.

Many volunteers interact with and provide services to children, especially those experiencing disadvantage. The most recent official data³ on volunteering showed that nearly 6 million people volunteer each year (for an organisation or group). Of those, 39% volunteer in 'sport and physical recreation', 12% volunteer for 'parenting, children and youth' organisations and 22% volunteer for 'education and training' organisations. Much of this volunteering will involve direct engagement with children and young people.

It is, therefore, vital that the National Strategy and the National Action Plans explicitly considers volunteer involvement. Many organisations that are reliant on volunteers do not have the same level of resourcing to be child safe as other types of organisation, and this should be factored into the strategy development and implementation.

We support the proposed values which will underpin and guide the implementation of the National Strategy. The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement are grounded in several principles⁴, including that volunteers have rights (to work in a safe and supportive environment) and responsibilities (acting responsibly and being accountable for their actions). This applies to all volunteers – adults and the many children and young people who volunteer. The proposed values that will underpin the National Strategy complement the principles that are the foundation of the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement.

Strategic priority themes

The strategic priority themes are appropriate priorities for the First National Action Plan and First Commonwealth Action Plan.

We would like to take this opportunity to raise the importance of the ongoing work across Australia to adopt the National Standards for Working with Children Checks and the establishment of the National Reference System for Working with Children Checks. As the National and State/Territory peak volunteering bodies, we see great merit in advancing harmonisation of Working with Children Checks (and other worker screening checks) across the country.

² These are included in the Annex to this document for ease of reference.

³ <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/general-social-survey-summary-results-australia/latest-release#voluntary-work-and-unpaid-work-support>

⁴ See page 4 here https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/National-Standards-Document-FINAL_Web.pdf

National Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse

Working in partnership

The intent to work in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders throughout the life of the National Strategy is welcome.

The current redesign of the Australian Government's Volunteer Management Activity (VMA) includes a new focus on working with three 'priority groups' - people with disability, First Nation Peoples and newly arrived migrants. As the National and State and Territory peak volunteering bodies, we are working closely with the Australian Government to progress this objective. As this work progresses, we can bring our learning to support the delivery of the National Strategy.

Conclusion

Volunteering Australia and the State and Territory volunteering peak bodies fully support the development of the National Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse and look forward to playing our role in its ongoing development and implementation.

National Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse

Annex: Attachment A of the Consultation Paper

We have consulted a wide range of stakeholders in the development of the National Strategy. Through these consultations and in line with Royal Commission recommendations, we have developed a proposed vision, objective, and values for the National Strategy noting these are yet to be considered by governments.

Proposed Vision

Australia is committed to a future where children and young people are protected and safe from sexual abuse

Proposed Objective

The objective specifies what success will look like if the National Strategy is effective.

The National Strategy will reduce the risk, extent and impact of child sexual abuse and related harms in Australia.

Proposed Values

These proposed values are the core principles that underpin the National Strategy. They guide the work being done to achieve the National Strategy's vision and objective, including the design and implementation of actions under the National Strategy.

Value One: Child safety is everyone's responsibility. Australian governments, non-government organisations and institutions, industry, communities, families and individuals all have a role to play.

Value Two: The diverse voices of victims and survivors must and will continue to shape the design and implementation of the National Strategy.

Value Three: We value children's voices and experiences and our engagement is age appropriate, child-centred and tailored to children's diverse needs and circumstances.

Value Four: We work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to embed cultural safety and trauma-informed practice in the design and delivery of childsafe initiatives.

Value Five: All initiatives are evidence-based and use data and research to build understanding of what works to prevent child sexual abuse.

Value Six: We focus on providing behavioural change supports to children with harmful sexual behaviours and delivering evidence-based interventions to deter manage and rehabilitate adult offenders.

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Authorisation

This submission has been authorised by the Chief Executive Officer of Volunteering Australia.



Mr Mark Pearce
Chief Executive Officer

Endorsements

This position statement has been endorsed by the seven State and Territory volunteering peak bodies.



About Volunteering Australia

Volunteering Australia is the national peak body for volunteering, working to advance volunteering in the Australian community. The seven State and Territory volunteering peak bodies work to advance and promote volunteering in their respective jurisdictions and are Foundation Members of Volunteering Australia.

Volunteering Australia's vision is strong, connected communities through volunteering. Our mission is to lead, strengthen, promote and celebrate volunteering in Australia.

National Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse

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