



National Centre for Action
on Child Sexual Abuse

Here for Change

Five Year Strategy

2023—2027

Acknowledgements

The National Centre respectfully acknowledges and celebrates the many Traditional Owners of the lands throughout Australia and pay our respects to ancestors of this country and Elders past and present. We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culture and lore have existed within Australia continuously for 65,000 years.

We acknowledge the ongoing leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia and those who have and continue to work tirelessly to address inequalities and improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice outcomes for children and young people. The National Centre is committed to ensuring that the voices of those whose lives are affected by the decisions governments make should fundamentally inform those decisions. First Nations voices must be heard, raised and amplified through a Voice to Parliament. It is time for genuine and significant reform to progress healing through the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

We seek to honour the lived expertise of all survivors of child sexual abuse, harnessing all ages, cultures, abilities and backgrounds, and commit to substantially addressing the harm of child sexual abuse, now and well into the future. We recognise that there are children and young people today who are experiencing sexual abuse and dedicate ourselves to doing all we can to promote their effective protection and care.

We acknowledge and extend our thanks to everyone who contributed to the development of Here for Change - Five Year Strategy including:

- victims and survivors of child sexual abuse and their families
- First Nations peoples
- culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- LGBTQIA+ communities
- people with disability
- education providers
- practitioners and services
- academics and researchers
- Australian and state/territory governments.

Further information is available on the National Centre website.

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Note on language

Our working definitions for key terms we use in this Strategy are presented in Table 1. The National Centre will collaborate with key stakeholders to develop a shared language of key terms and concepts as a priority action within its first year.

TABLE 1

Key terms and definitions

Children and young people

Individuals under the age of 18 years.

Child sexual abuse¹

Any act which exposes a child or young person to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond their understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually abusive behaviours can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger, or any other object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, grooming, exhibitionism, and exposing the child or young person to or involving them in pornography or child abuse material.

Child sexual exploitation

A form of sexual abuse targeting children and young people under 18 who are manipulated or coerced to undertake sexual acts in exchange for any actual or promised benefit, for example food, accommodation, affection, money and/or gifts.

Child abuse material

Material that depicts or describes a child, or a representation of a child, who is or appears to be under the age of 18, and who is or appears to be in a sexual pose or sexual activity, or that shows or describes the person's sexual organs or breasts as a dominant characteristic. This definition also includes material that depicts or describes a child, or a representation of a child, as a victim of torture, cruelty or physical abuse.

Co-design (and Design)

Co-design is an iterative and participatory process that brings people together to address health and social care issues, design solutions, and improve outcomes for those who need them most.

People with lived and living experience of child sexual abuse are central to the co-design process. Their knowledge and expertise are essential for understanding the impacts the trauma of child sexual abuse on individuals' health, daily life, and on society and innovating potential solutions.

The National Centre views co-design as a broad endeavour that also engages with practitioners, policymakers, specialists, and other key stakeholders depending on the scope and nature of the project.

Co-design is not a consultation or one-off event – it is an iterative process of genuinely bringing people together to share ideas, generate solutions, test and refine innovations, and collectively work toward achieving positive outcomes.²

Complex trauma³

Repeated, ongoing and often extreme and usually interpersonal trauma – violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation experienced as a child, young person or adult.

Dissociation

A process in which a person is disconnected from their thoughts, feelings, memories, behaviours, physical sensations or sense of identity.

Evidence and knowledge

Used interchangeably and defined “inclusively” so that research and practice-based evidence is not privileged over cultural, traditional and knowledge derived through lived and living experience.

First Nations

First Nations refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and is used to acknowledge the significant diversity of nations, cultures and languages within these two groups.

Gendered violence⁴

Harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender.

Grooming

Building a relationship, emotional connection or trust with a child, young person or their family and friends online or offline with the intention of committing a sexual offence.

Harmful sexual behaviours

Harmful sexual behaviours are sexual behaviours displayed by children and young people that fall outside what may be considered developmentally, socially and culturally expected, may cause harm to themselves or others, and occur either face to face and/or via technology. When these behaviours involve another child or young person, they may include a lack of consent, reciprocity, mutuality, and involve the use of coercion, force or a misuse of power.

Lifespan

The total length of time for which a person lives.

Online child sexual abuse and exploitation

All child sexual abuse and exploitation that at any point has a connection to the online environment.

Perpetrator

An adult over 18 years who has sexually abused a child or young person, but who may or may not have been convicted of this crime.

Re-traumatisation

Re-traumatisation is the reliving of stress reactions as a result of a traumatic event when faced with a new or similar incident. It is experienced as a physiological and emotional stress reaction and can be triggered by a thought, sensory cue, circumstance or interaction that is reminiscent of prior trauma, including in the service system.

Trauma-informed

A reconceptualisation of traditional approaches to health and human service delivery whereby all aspects of services are organised around an awareness of the prevalence of trauma and its possible long-term impacts. Services which are trauma-informed are aware of and sensitive to the dynamics of trauma, seeking to minimise the risks of re-traumatisation, and foster healing and recovery with or without providing therapeutic programs for individuals who have experienced trauma.

Victims and survivors

People of any age, background or culture who have experienced child sexual abuse. The terms “victims and survivors” and “people with lived and living experience of child sexual abuse” are used interchangeably in recognition that different language resonates at different times and is appropriate for and with different people and contexts.





Introduction

The National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse (the National Centre) is a symbol of hope and an essential vehicle for action for many victims and survivors of child sexual abuse.

Its formation recognises the decades of advocacy by victims and survivors to be listened to, believed, validated, protected and ultimately supported to heal from the trauma they carry with them. Its focus extends beyond institutional child sexual abuse to abuse that occurs in the family, community and online.

The National Centre is a critical recommendation from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (the Royal Commission). It has a key role that is separate and independent from government. Its role includes:

- providing leadership on integrated responses to child sexual abuse and its impacts across the country, for example, through national agendas
 - increasing community understanding and recognition of child sexual abuse and the underlying power and contextual dynamics which drive it
 - enhancing understanding about children and young people who have engaged in harmful sexual behaviour and how to best support and intervene with them and the network of important adults around them
 - promoting effective policy and practices to protect children and young people from sexual abuse
 - building a relevant and robust knowledge base including through collaboration on and alignment with the Child Safety Research Agenda being led by the National Office for Child Safety (National Office) under the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030
 - increasing professional expertise through workforce capability building to improve service responses to child and adult victims and survivors of child sexual abuse
 - reducing the harm and stigma that child sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour cause
 - promoting whole of society understanding and change
 - strengthening pathways for disclosure and healing for victims and survivors, including strategies to improve service coordination.
- The National Centre has woven the voices and experiences of victims and survivors into its very fabric. It acknowledges the strength and expertise that derives from their lived and living experience of child sexual abuse. The National Centre recognises and honours the diversity of victims and survivors' experiences, identities and cultural backgrounds and their contributions to the common purpose of addressing child sexual abuse.

We believe in the power of partnerships with victims and survivors of child sexual abuse and everyone who cares about and supports them. We work to drive the generational change that is needed to tackle child sexual abuse in families, communities and institutions and online.

The National Centre provides an important avenue for focusing the community's attention firmly on the protection of children and young people from sexual abuse. It also works to ensure the experiences of victims and survivors influence and shape government policy, service responses and our collective commitment to an environment in which they are safe to seek and receive the type of support they need, when they need it and wherever they are to help them heal and recover.

The National Centre is a partnership between three leading national organisations with a long-standing commitment to supporting children, young people and adults to heal from child sexual abuse. Blue Knot Foundation, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation and the Australian Childhood Foundation bring their collective expertise to enable the National Centre to fulfill the ambitions of victims and survivors, the Royal Commission, Commonwealth and State and Territory governments, service providers and the broader community.

Since its establishment in October 2021, the National Centre has developed meaningful ways to listen to and involve people with lived and living experiences of child sexual abuse; initiated the development of approaches to ensure the participation of children and young people in its work; built on relationships with service providers, researchers and governments; and completed nine research projects to understand where it can have the most impact.

This Here for Change - Five Year Strategy sets the starting point for what the National Centre intends to do. We cannot achieve our plans without collaborating closely with the many national, state and local initiatives and plans in the making or already underway. For that reason, the National Centre will periodically pause and reflect on the best way it can continue to meet the intentions of those the Strategy seeks to benefit. Here for Change – Five Year Strategy will continue to evolve over time with the input of victims and survivors and other key people and organisations.



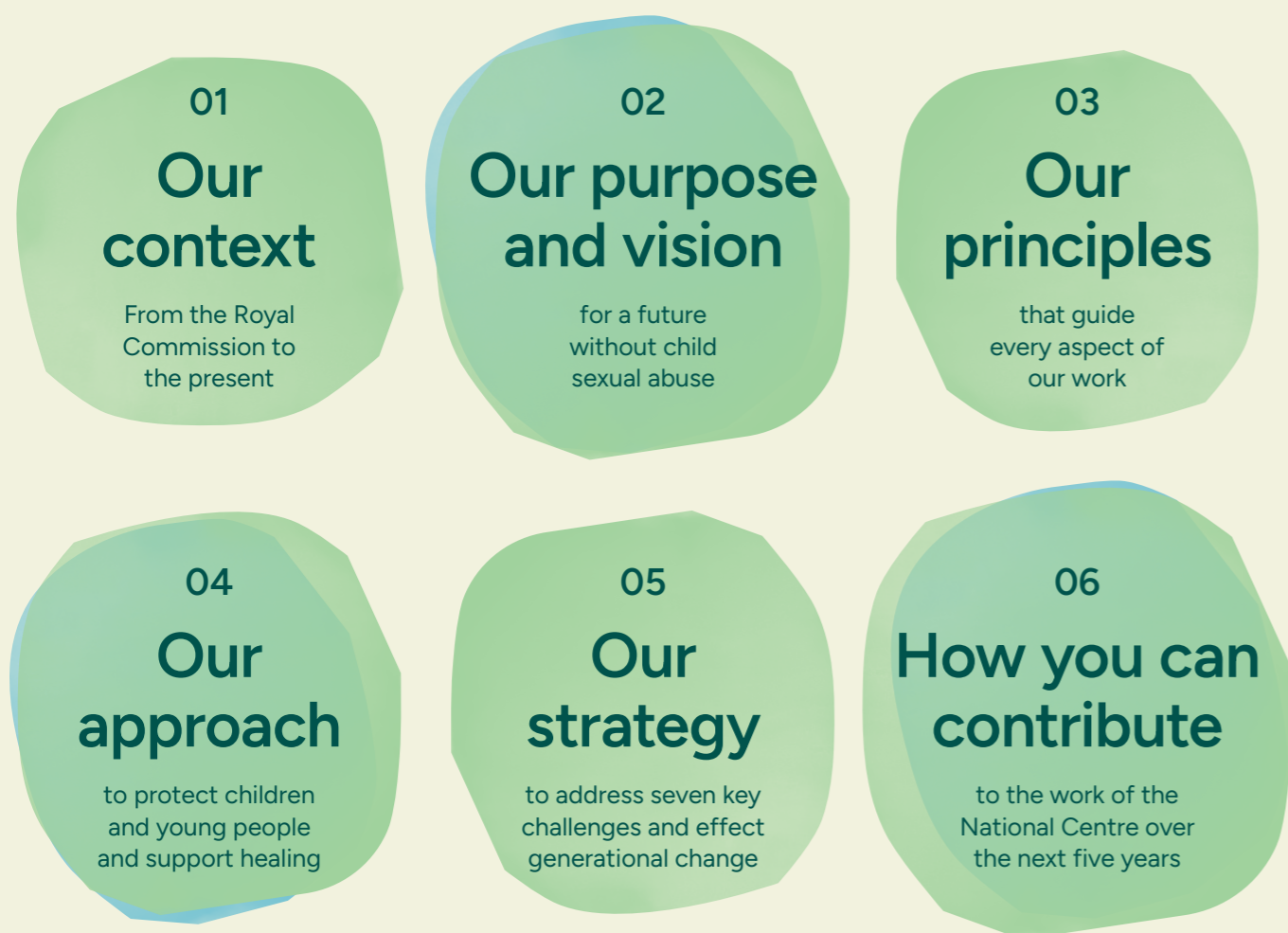
WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE

Here for Change – Five Year Strategy?

Here for Change represents the start of a committed journey for the National Centre to transform the way that child sexual abuse is understood and responded to in Australia. It describes a collective ambition in which we all work together to:

- empower, educate and enable families, communities and service providers to better meet the needs of victims and survivors of child sexual abuse across their lifespan
- empower children, young people and adults who have experienced child sexual abuse to heal and recover
- inspire community, policy and practice change to stop child sexual abuse from occurring.

This document has six sections:



SECTION 1:

Our context

The National Centre was a key recommendation of the Royal Commission. Of the 136 Royal Commissions conducted since federation, this was the first relating specifically to the sexual abuse of children and young people.

It was a watershed inquiry that helped the nation to understand the real and enduring effects of the trauma stemming from child sexual abuse. It also made it clear that “the number of children who are sexually abused in familial or other circumstances far exceeds those who are abused in an institution.”⁵

As such, the National Centre will focus on child sexual abuse in all the contexts in which it occurs.

The National Centre is indeed, Here for Change.





...Tens of thousands of children have been sexually abused in many Australian institutions. We will never know the true number. Whatever the number, it is a national tragedy, perpetrated over generations within many of our trusted institutions...

The sexual abuse of children has occurred in almost every type of institution where children reside or attend for educational, recreational, sporting, religious or cultural activities.

Some institutions have had multiple abusers who sexually abused multiple children. It is not a case of a few 'rotten apples'... the problems have been so widespread, and the nature of the abuse so heinous, that it is difficult to comprehend...

Final Report from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

SECTION 2:

Our purpose and vision

Child sexual abuse is a crime. It is common, affecting children and young people of all ages and diverse backgrounds. Child sexual abuse is complex, layered and compounding with a potential ripple effect impacting the emotional, physical, social and economic well-being of victims and survivors and their families over their lifespan.

While victims and survivors come from across society, certain groups of children and young people are at increased risk of experiencing child sexual abuse due to their age and gender, among other factors.

The National Centre seeks to amplify the voices of victims and survivors in their diversity, reflecting and respecting their varied experiences while uniting and empowering them all through a shared vision and purpose for the Centre.

1 million

Australian women were sexually abused before the age of 15⁶

0.4 million

Australian men were sexually abused before the age of 15⁶

28.5%

Overall prevalence of child sexual abuse in Australia¹⁰

78%

of children who experience child sexual abuse experience it **more than once**¹⁰

46%

of female sexual abuse victims were aged **between 10 and 19**⁸

20%

of **adults with a disability** experienced sexual abuse before the age of 15⁷

15%

of victims and survivors consulted in the Royal Commission were **First Nations peoples**⁹



Our vision

The vision of the National Centre is a community in which children and young people are **safe** and victims and survivors of child sexual abuse are supported to **heal and recover**, free of stigma and shame – **a future without child sexual abuse**.

Through our principles, approach and actions, we demonstrate how we honour and respect the experiences and insights of victims and survivors, ensure their privacy and confidentiality, and empower their voices to collectively achieve our vision. We hold a commitment to the rights of children, young people and adults to safety and care.

We strongly believe that perpetrators of child sexual abuse should be held accountable for their behaviour. We will support efforts to identify and work with individuals at risk of perpetrating child sexual abuse. We will work to improve the criminal justice system so that such accountability is ensured, that victims and survivors do not experience additional trauma in seeking justice, and that the most effective interventions to reduce recidivism are implemented nationally.

Our purpose

The purpose of the National Centre is to disrupt the dynamics that have failed to **stop** child sexual abuse and prevented victims and survivors from being **believed**, validated and **supported** in the ways they need.

The purpose of the National Centre

The founding partners of the National Centre, along with the government agencies that have played a critical role in its establishment, are united by a long-term commitment to lead and support real and sustained change that will substantially improve the lives of victims and survivors of child sexual abuse across their lifespan and to the safety of children and young people now and in the future.

We respect and honour the diversity of experiences and impacts of child sexual abuse, while uniting people behind a common purpose to address child sexual abuse. We partner with victims and survivors in all our work, valuing their knowledge and experience, embedding the expertise of adults with lived and living experience of child sexual abuse, the rich strength of knowledge from First Nations peoples and the voices of children and young people.

In pursuit of our shared goal, we nonetheless recognise the specific needs and strengths of First Nations peoples and their culture in framing and supporting efforts to reduce child sexual abuse and support victims and survivors. The Healing Foundation is integral to leading our collective endeavours in this work.

Further, in taking a holistic and non-reductionist approach to understanding and addressing child sexual abuse, the National Centre acknowledges the interconnected and intersecting structures of power that render certain children and young people more vulnerable to child sexual abuse, and victims and survivors unable to access pathways to healing and recovery. The National Centre appreciates the intersectional challenges of victims and survivors from diverse communities, including from culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CALD), First Nations communities, LGBTIQ+ communities, people living with disabilities, older Australians and individuals and families living in regional, rural and remote areas.

We understand that people with the lived and living experience of child sexual abuse may also face a number of complex issues such as gender-based violence including family and domestic violence and concurrent mental and physical health, drug and alcohol relationship and other life challenges. The National Centre will ensure that the needs of each group are included in our actions and resources, and we will establish key partnerships to ensure that holistic approaches to supporting victims and survivors of child sexual abuse are implemented.

The National Centre acknowledges the breadth and depth of stakeholders who already play a significant role in efforts to keep children and young people safe and reduce the harm of child sexual abuse. We will build relationships and connections with government, non-government, private, philanthropic and academic organisations to enable the shifts necessary to enable victims and survivors to access quality services and programs that aid their protection, healing and recovery. We are committed to genuine conversations, strategic partnerships, meaningful engagement, and influential collaborations with diverse communities and service providers.

The National Centre recognises that our work is fundamentally about the people we help. We include the voices of victims and survivors to shape our work, knowledge and leadership to ensure it is useful, authentic and appropriate.

As a symbol of hope and vehicle for action, the National Centre acknowledges the goals and also expectations of our stakeholders, and we look forward to working together to deliver on our vision and purpose.



How will the National Centre make a difference?

For victims and survivors

The National Centre will build understanding and improve community and service responses to you and your trauma to better support your healing and recovery from child sexual abuse.

For the community

The National Centre is a promise to keep child sexual abuse central to our awareness, empower more people to take action to prevent child sexual abuse, end all stigma associated with it and respond to the needs of children, young people and adults it has affected.

For governments

The National Centre is a respected source for up-to-date evidence and knowledge to inform public policy and service design for addressing child sexual abuse across the lifespan.

For services and institutions

The National Centre is an authoritative resource base that can support workforce capability building and offer advice about contemporary issues associated with delivering responses to victims and survivors.

For practitioners

The National Centre is a knowledge and learning hub for practice ready guides and tools that will strengthen your approach to protecting and responding to the needs of victims and survivors.

For researchers

The National Centre is a location for seeking funding for research and evaluation projects whose results will be translated into publications, resources and guides for practitioners, policy makers, educators and victims and survivors.

SECTION 3:

Our principles

01

Inclusive and culturally safe

- We value people of all cultures and honour their experiences.
- We engage with different voices and views including those not previously heard.
- We tailor our approaches to meet the needs of different individuals and groups of all abilities.
- We draw on lots of voices as each voice is unique.
- We foster equity, access and choice.
- We drive change by testing new and creative ways for connecting with all stakeholders.
- We are inclusive of the experiences and voices of peoples living with vulnerabilities and those with additional needs.

02

Participatory and collaborative

- We create safety for children, young people and adults to enable meaningful participation.
- We use co-design processes which value everyone's expertise.
- We actively draw on different forms of knowledge to inform responses.
- We collaborate and partner to achieve maximum impact.
- We have clear processes to make informed collaborative decisions for purpose.
- We leverage all forms of evidence – including from lived experience, practice and research.

03

Victim and survivor-led

- We amplify the voices of victims and survivors from diverse backgrounds, cultures and abilities.
- We recognise the knowledge of lived and living experience at the core of the evidence we mobilise.
- We prioritise the safety of children and young people in our work and engagement.
- We are responsive to intersectionality in all aspects of our work and engagement.
- We value, honour and respect the lived and living wisdom of victims and survivors.
- We leverage the leadership and decision-making expertise of victims and survivors to shape and co-design responses.
- We are courageous in our work and in honouring victims and survivors, unafraid to be disruptors to influence change.

04

Development, attachment, trauma and healing-informed

- We seek opportunities to empower healing, reduce harm and minimise additional trauma.
- We foster relationships and take a strengths-based approach to healing and recovery.
- We recognise the sovereignty of First Nations peoples, culture and communities.
- We use a developmental and attachment lens to inform understanding of the impacts of child sexual abuse and complex trauma related to child sexual abuse.
- We foster safety and trust in interactions with all stakeholders and challenge stigma and discrimination wherever they arise.
- We embed a commitment to evaluation, reflective learning and continuous improvement in all we do.

05

Responsive to power dynamics

- We understand the complex relationship between child sexual abuse and other forms of violence, in particular family violence.
- We recognise that the gendered, structural, coercive, economic and institutional nature of power imbalances in society drive both child sexual abuse, gendered violence and family violence.
- We actively consider how power structures in families, communities and institutions make children vulnerable to abuse and exploitation of all forms and render adults with lived and living experience of child sexual abuse and other traumas at increased risk of revictimisation.



SECTION 4:

Our approach

We have a strong and clear vision of the change we intend to achieve and how we will do it. By bringing together stakeholders, our Founding Members and the National Centre's own capability across all of its functional areas, the National Centre will amplify the voices of victims and survivors through research and evaluation, leadership and collaboration, awareness raising, stigma reduction and capability building.

Functional Areas



Outcomes

- Victims and survivors of child sexual abuse across the lifespan are supported to recover and heal from its traumatic effects
- Children and young people are effectively protected from child sexual abuse
- The voices of victims and survivors are amplified in policy, services and research

The National Centre will align, collaborate and partner with stakeholders across Australia.

We recognise and support the diverse groups of people and organisations that are committed to addressing child sexual abuse across Australia, such as those below.



Our role is distinct from, but complementary to, that of State and Territory governments and key government agencies that respond to child sexual abuse, such as the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation (ACCCE) and the eSafety Commissioner (who address online safety and online child sexual abuse), the Department of

Social Services (DSS), and the Attorney-General's Department (the National Office), as shown below. We will collaborate with these organisations in a range of ways – for example, sharing resources, leading and driving research, and influencing through participation in advisory structures.



As part of our approach, we recognise the importance of working collaboratively to reduce duplication and build on the invaluable work happening across multiple intersecting initiatives and plans. We will work to support, collaborate with and lead in the various areas of our shared and respective agendas.

We also recognise the need to align with relevant initiatives already in progress, key examples of which include:

- Safe and Supported: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031
- National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- eSafety Strategy 2022-25
- ACCCE Strategic Plan 2022-2026
- National Agreement on Closing the Gap
- National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan
- National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Vision 2030: Blueprint for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021-2031
- Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031
- State and Territory Reform Plans
- National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-32.

Here for Change - Five Year Strategy will support the Closing the Gap framework through a strengths-based approach to working with First Nations communities, and align with priority reforms including:

- formal partnerships and shared decision-making
- building the community-controlled sector
- supporting diverse communities to develop healing approaches
- developing best practice tools and resources
- transforming government organisations
- shared access to data and information at a regional level.

The National Centre will also align itself with the work plans and considerable investment that each State and Territory government is making in their response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission and their ongoing commitment to strengthen ways of supporting children, young people and adults with lived and living experiences of child sexual abuse.

SECTION 5:

Here for Change – Our Five Year Strategy

Here for Change – Five Year Strategy frames seven critical challenges that represent our shared understanding of what must change.

The challenges have been informed by the Scoping Study undertaken as a key action in the National Centre's first year of operation, which mapped the current state of knowledge and evidence in relation to child sexual abuse, including its consequences across a person's lifespan, effective ways to prevent and respond to it, and strategies for improving the responses to victims and survivors. The challenges align to the three key components of the Royal Commission's recommendations for the National Centre to:

- Recommendation 9a – **raise awareness**
- Recommendation 9b – **build capability**
- Recommendation 9c – **build the evidence base.**

These challenges are broad and recognise the complex, multifaceted and interconnected problems we face in preventing and better responding to child sexual abuse. For each of these challenges, we have articulated a series of priorities that we believe are achievable within the next five years. Addressing the challenges in full will take more than five years given the scale of the problem and its entrenched and complex nature.

Here for Change - Five Year Strategy primarily focuses on the needs of victims and survivors in accordance with the recommendations of the Royal Commission. With a core goal of privileging and amplifying the voices of victims and survivors, the National Centre engages with, but remains distinct from, others who primarily address prevention and intervention under the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030, such as the ACCCE and the Attorney-General's Department, including the National Office.

Here for Change – Five Year Strategy:

- sets aspirational targets grounded in the reality of what is achievable in a five-year timeframe
- recognises the weight of expectation of the people of Australia for a National Centre that works to limit the harm child sexual abuse causes to individuals and communities and to stop child sexual abuse before it starts
- acknowledges the lived and living expertise of victims and survivors, including but not limited to:
 - children, young people, adults and older age groups
 - First Nations peoples
 - people living with disabilities and/or with neurodiversity
 - people from the LGBTIQ+ community
 - people from culturally and linguistically diverse background
 - care leavers
 - people from regional, rural and remote areas.
- reflects that child sexual abuse is a complex problem that requires diverse nuanced strategies that are coordinated, integrated, and adequately resourced over the long-term
- sits within a complex matrix of responsibilities and initiatives involving victims and survivors, their loved ones and communities, and a diverse mix of other stakeholders
- will evolve progressively as we listen, adapt, collaborate with our partners and shape our work together.





An important note about priority populations

“Gender, class, ethnicity, cultural background, disability and sexual orientation can expose people to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation.”¹¹ Certain communities sometimes referred to as ‘priority populations’ or ‘priority groups’ are consequently more vulnerable to different forms of violence and abuse including child sexual abuse. These communities include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people with a disability and LGBTQIA+ people.

There is also a strong correlation between people who have experienced or been exposed to sexual, domestic and family violence either as a child or adult, and child sexual abuse. Further, as highlighted by the recent Australian Child Maltreatment Study, girls and young women experience 2.4 times the rate of child sexual abuse, compared to boys and young men.¹² Responses to child sexual abuse must therefore adopt a gendered and intersectional approach which acknowledges multiple and intersecting forms of disadvantage, and is sensitive, inclusive and responsive to the needs of different communities.

As an organisation with a singular focus on child sexual abuse, the National Centre sees victims and survivors of child sexual abuse as its primary priority population. A startling 28.5% of the population has experienced child sexual abuse.

To truly shift the dial on the prevalence and impact of child sexual abuse, the spotlight must remain on the experience and impacts on victims and survivors of child sexual abuse across all ages, stages, socioeconomic and demographic groups.

Here for Change - Five Year Strategy is based on a comprehensive evidence base:

Royal Commission and subsequent national consultation process

Practice knowledge of the founding organisations of the National Centre

Insights from victims and survivors with lived and living experience of child sexual abuse

Comprehensive scoping study mapping and state of knowledge and evidence

Commonwealth and state/territory strategies, frameworks and plans

Consultation with a diverse group of stakeholders

ONCE UPON A TIME, HELD TIGHTLY INSIDE OF ME, WAS A BOX OF HURT KEPT CAREFULLY WRAPPED AND HIDDEN. IT FELT THAT IF IT WERE OPENED UP, ALL OF THE PAIN BURIED WITHIN, WOULD POUR OUT AND BE OVERWHELMING. WHEN MY DAUGHTERS WERE BORN, THERE WAS A POWERFUL DESIRE TO **HEAL**, FOR THEIR SAKE. REALLY, IT WAS FOR MYSELF.

BEGINNING WHAT WOULD BE MANY YEARS OF COUNSELLING, THE FEELINGS OF BEING OVERWHELMED BY TRAUMA NEVER HAPPENED. INSTEAD, IT WAS A STEADY PROCESS OF UNPACKING, **ACCEPTANCE** AND **SELF-CARING**. IN TIME THE SHAME THAT WAS NEVER MINE TO CARRY, WAS SET DOWN. I SPOKE UP AGAINST MY ABUSER. I SPOKE OUT FOR MYSELF. NOW, BEING A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR ACTION ON CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IS AN **EMPOWERING** OPPORTUNITY TO USE MY VOICE FOR OTHERS AND TO BE A PART OF MAKING POSITIVE, NECESSARY AND OVERDUE CHANGES. BRINGING AWARENESS TO THIS COMMON ABUSE THAT IS INFREQUENTLY AND UNCOMFORTABLY SPOKEN ABOUT, WE ARE SUPPORTING VICTIMS/SURVIVORS TO HEAL AND **THRIVE**. PROTECTION! ALL BODIES AND SOULS TOGETHER, WE ARE FOR DESERVE RESPECT AND TO BE SAFE!

Real stories from our lived experience college members.



Here for Change

Five Year Strategy

The challenges we need to address

Child sexual abuse and its effects across the lifespan of victims and survivors are not well understood or identified in the community.

People with lived and living experiences of child sexual abuse are often not believed and responded to with compassion.

Children, young people and adults with experiences of child sexual abuse (or their parents or carers) are often not identified, protected or well supported when they raise concerns or disclose.

Children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour require adults to better understand and meet their needs.

Victims and survivors of child sexual abuse are often unable to access the support and resources that meet their changing needs at different times in their lives.

Knowledge about complex and intergenerational trauma and dissociation does not generally inform responses to individuals with lived and living experiences of child sexual abuse.

Child sexual abuse will not be stopped unless there is a comprehensive framework for addressing the power dynamics and factors which enable it.

The change we want to see

People and communities better identify and understand child sexual abuse and the ways it can affect victims and survivors across their lifespans, as well as their families and communities, leading to a reduction in stigma associated with child sexual abuse.

The community is more compassionate and trauma aware and understands trauma associated with child sexual abuse is complex and compounding, often impacting the physical, social, mental and economic wellbeing of victims and survivors and their families.

Victims and survivors are seen, believed and supported in ways that help them to heal with strength and connections to others. Families, friends and service providers hold knowledge about how victims and survivors disclose their abuse experiences and seek support.

Children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour (and their important adults) are better resourced to receive the support they need including to stop the behaviour. There is greater community understanding of harmful sexual behaviour.

It is easier for victims and survivors to receive the support they need, when and where they need it, to live and heal. Health and ageing, community and justice systems are more aware and responsive to people who have experienced child sexual abuse.

Victims and survivors are no longer stuck in a system driven by and delivering surface level responses, because workforces are better equipped to respond to their needs.

Progress is made to stop child sexual abuse before it starts.

Our functional areas

Leadership and collaboration

Awareness raising

Stigma reduction

Capability building

Research and evaluation

We will partner with

People with lived and living experience of child sexual abuse and their loved ones

Community, in all its forms

Governments (policy makers, regulators and funders)

Researchers

Practitioners and services

Education providers

Corporate and philanthropy



Challenge 1

Child sexual abuse and its effects across the lifespan of victims and survivors are not well understood or identified in the community.

The change we want to see

People and communities better identify and understand child sexual abuse and the different ways it can affect victims and survivors at different times in their lives, as well as their families and communities, leading to a reduction in stigma associated with child sexual abuse.

What we will do over the next five years

The National Centre will foster a shared language to advance understanding about child sexual abuse (including grooming) and its effects across the lifespan of victims and survivors. We will also support efforts to measure the prevalence and impact of child sexual abuse, including the number and needs of victims and survivors over time. We will measure community understanding and attitudes about child sexual abuse. We will also collaborate to help raise awareness about online child sexual abuse and exploitation.

What we will focus on in Year 1

- Collaborate and co-design, including with people with lived and living experience, to develop a shared language presented in a preferred definitions framework about child sexual abuse (including grooming and exploitation), online and offline, what it is and how it affects individuals, at different times in their lives, families and diverse communities. A shared language of key terms and concepts is critical to building community awareness.

- Support the development of a framework to measure the scale and consequences of child sexual abuse over time to create a long-term prevalence estimates dataset, and to describe the needs of victims and survivors across their lifespans. It will be shaped by and contribute to the Australian Child Maltreatment Study.
- Commission further research into the intersection of child sexual abuse with other forms of violation such as gendered violence including family and domestic violence and other forms of child abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- Commission research to build a comprehensive understanding of intrafamilial child sexual abuse and support its incorporation into all aspects of child sexual abuse prevention, intervention and service design and delivery for victims and survivors.
- Benchmark current community knowledge and attitudes about child sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour in Australia and use the results to develop a key message framework that can support community awareness raising initiatives.
- Collaborate with the National Office, ACCCE, the eSafety Commissioner, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), State and Territory governments, service organisations, peak bodies and others to develop and implement community awareness initiatives about a range of key topics including about the impacts of child sexual abuse across the lifespan of victims and survivors and strategies for reducing stigma.

What we will focus on in Years 2–3

- Disseminate the preferred definitions framework developed in Year 1 to stakeholders including government, practitioners and services, education providers, and community.
- Build the capacity of specialist and generalist services to implement the preferred definition framework within their own practice, program design and service delivery to promote consistency of language within the service community.
- Build partnerships with government and researchers to support a coordinated approach to measurement and tracking of child sexual abuse.
- Develop a clear theory of change for the prevention of child sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour that is multi-layered, addresses the precursors to child sexual abuse and provides a robust conceptualisation of the short, medium and long-term outcomes (See actions identified in response to Challenge 7).
- Commission research that resources and supports the theory of change for the prevention of child sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour (See actions identified in response to Challenge 7).
- Support the design of accessible and culturally sensitive campaigns with evaluation in mind including consideration of logic models, implementation science, and attitudinal and behaviour change theories.
- Consolidate and build on collaboration with the National Office, ACCCE, the eSafety Commissioner, ANROWS, State and Territory governments, service organisations, researchers, peak bodies and others to develop and implement community awareness initiatives about a range of key topics, including about the impacts of child sexual abuse across the lifespan of victims and survivors and strategies for reducing stigma.
- Continue to conduct the annual community attitudes tracking study and use its results to refine messaging to raise awareness of child sexual abuse and reduce stigma related to it in the community.
- Collaborate with the sector and State, Territory and Australian Governments to provide national leadership to support effective policy development, implementation and coordination to better support victims and survivors of child sexual abuse.
- Build awareness of the downstream consequences of child sexual abuse for victims and survivors, including within the family and across the lifespan, through co-design, research and capacity building initiatives.

What we will focus on in Years 4-5

- Continue to conduct the annual community attitudes study and use its results to refine and target messages and measure impact of the collective efforts of the National Centre and others to raise awareness, reduce stigma and improve responses to and healing and recovery for victims and survivors of child sexual abuse.
- Consolidate and build on collaboration with the National Office, ACCCE, the eSafety Commissioner, ANROWS, State and Territory governments, Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), service organisations, peak bodies and others to develop and implement community awareness initiatives about a range of key topics, including about the impacts of child sexual abuse across the lifespan of victims and survivors and strategies for reducing stigma.
- Consolidate and build on activities to effectively track and monitor the scale of child sexual abuse and its consequences in the community.
- Disseminate and translate research findings about the issue, scale and impacts of child sexual abuse, including within the family, across the community and relevant sectors which support victims and survivors.

What success will look like

- The language which describes child sexual abuse (including grooming), online and offline, is consistent, shared and informed by an understanding of complex trauma and relevant evidence and knowledge.
- There is greater consistency and coordination in the measures used to track trends about child sexual abuse and exploitation.
- Improved capacity to monitor and track community awareness and understanding of the issue of child sexual abuse.
- Improved community awareness and education around myths and stigma experienced by children, young people and adults including with disability and their families.
- A better understanding of child sexual abuse in the family and its effects on different family members informs improvements to policy, practice and service responses.



Challenge 2

People with lived and living experiences of child sexual abuse are often not believed and responded to with compassion.

The experiences of victims and survivors have highlighted that they have often received stigmatising and isolating responses from family, friends and their community, including practitioners and services. Healing is predicated on validation, safety and empathy. Victims and survivors will benefit from responses that are compassionate, understanding and accepting of their unique experiences of trauma.

The change we want to see

The community is more compassionate and trauma aware and understands trauma associated with child sexual abuse is complex and compounding, often impacting the physical, social, mental and economic wellbeing of victims and survivors and their families.

What we will do over the next five years

The National Centre will build greater compassion and understanding for people with the lived and living experiences of child sexual abuse, including those at risk of harm, and their families and carers. It will foster a more trauma aware community and service sectors in which victims and survivors are better seen, heard and believed and better equipped and empowered to seek help.

What we will focus on in Year 1

- Design and develop learning materials and opportunities for practitioners and service providers to acquire knowledge about how compassion in relation to trauma can be transformative for victims and survivors of child sexual abuse over their lifespan.
- Identify and commission research that will facilitate and build community awareness and understanding to reduce stigma and enable victims and survivors to seek help.
- Incorporate information about compassion in relation to trauma into the first National Centre community attitude survey to inform and support initiatives to raise awareness and reduce stigma across diverse communities.
- Undertake further research with higher education, vocational providers and professional bodies regarding the inclusion of trauma-informed curricula and child sexual abuse within key qualification pathways for practitioners.

- Undertake a further training needs analysis of key sector workforces, building on the findings of the scoping study to support the development of a learning and development strategy. This will include a focus on issues such as responding to and communicating with vulnerable and diverse populations; culturally safe practice that recognises the diversity within workforces; and training for government agencies and other service providers in how to meaningfully, and safely, ensure lived and living experience informs their practice.

What we will focus on in Years 2–3

- Undertake a training needs analysis to monitor the changing needs of key sector workforces and develop capacity building opportunities to address these with regard to trauma-informed practice with victims and survivors of child sexual abuse.
- Continue to develop and roll out accessible practice guides, tools and learning opportunities about trauma-informed practice regarding child sexual abuse.
- Partner with higher education, vocational providers and professional bodies regarding the development of trauma-informed curricula on child sexual abuse within key qualification pathways for practitioners.
- Incorporate relevant research outcomes as they become available into practice-ready tools and resources and training opportunities. Fund research projects that support compassion and trauma-informed practice with victims and survivors of child sexual abuse.
- Continue to conduct the community attitudes study and use its results to refine messages to raise awareness of and reduce stigma to child sexual abuse and its traumatic consequences.
- Provide ongoing support for the implementation of guidelines for effective delivery of services to respond to the impacts of child sexual abuse across the lifespan for victims and survivors and across diverse groups and communities.
- Support the evaluation of services which adopt trauma-informed approaches in their service delivery.

What we will focus on in Years 4–5

- Incorporate content about trauma, compassion and its relation to child sexual abuse for initiatives that support community awareness raising and stigma reduction.
- Collate the research conducted in Years 2-3, report on its results and identify future research priorities.
- Continue to conduct the community attitudes study and use its results to refine and target messages that support awareness raising and stigma reduction strategies.
- Undertake a training needs analysis to monitor the changing needs of key sector workforces and develop capacity building opportunities to address these.
- Support the evaluation of services which adopt trauma-informed approaches in their service delivery.

What success will look like

- Knowledge about the need for compassion in relation to trauma is readily available to the community and relevant sectors.
- Child sexual abuse and its effects are spoken about publicly with compassion and understanding in the community.
- Victims and survivors of child sexual abuse are less likely to experience additional trauma in their interactions within diverse individuals and communities, including services.
- Service providers and practitioners have access to materials that support them to be more compassionate and trauma aware in their support of victims and survivors of child sexual abuse.
- Beginning professionals are better trained to respond compassionately to victims and survivors using a trauma-informed lens.



Challenge 3

Children, young people and adults with experiences of child sexual abuse (or their parents or carers) are often not identified, protected or well supported when they raise concerns or disclose.

Children, young people, and adults experiencing child sexual abuse in our community are often not identified or do not receive adequate responses when they reach out to others to talk about their first, subsequent, historical or current experience of child sexual abuse. Greater understanding within the community and by service providers about the ways victims and survivors present, raise concerns and disclose child sexual abuse will foster help-seeking and engagement with informal and formal supports.

The change we want to see

Victims and survivors of child sexual abuse are seen, believed and supported in ways that help them to heal with strength and connections to others. Families, friends and service providers hold contemporary knowledge about the ways that victims and survivors disclose their abuse experiences and how to assist them to seek support.

What we will do over the next five years

The National Centre will strengthen the capability of communities, professionals, services and systems to better identify and support victims and survivors across their lifespan. This will empower children, young people and adults to raise concerns, disclose and seek help. It will also identify other barriers to seeking and receiving help experienced by First Nations peoples and people from diverse communities including CALD people, people living with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ people, older Australians and individuals and families living in regional, rural and remote areas.

What we will focus on in Year 1

- Use the results of the community attitudes tracking study to develop a key message framework and resources for the community to enable understanding of grooming, barriers to disclosure and to support safe disclosures.
- Use the results of the training needs analysis to design and deliver practice guides, tools, learning materials and training opportunities for frontline services that help ensure that responses to disclosures by practitioners and support services are safe, effective, protective, trauma-informed, culturally safe and developmentally sensitive.
- Commission research that extends knowledge about patterns of disclosure across the lifespan of victims and survivors and about indicators of child sexual abuse (online and offline).
- Commence a co-design process with children and young people, victims and survivors regarding school-based curricula that focuses on disclosures, grooming and barriers to disclosure.
- Commence a co-design process with victims and survivors from a range of backgrounds to develop resources aimed at the community and practitioners regarding facilitating and supporting disclosures, informed by an understanding of grooming (both offline and online) and barriers to disclosure across the lifespan of victims and survivors.

What we will focus on in Years 2-3

- Continue to roll out learning materials and opportunities about disclosures across the lifespan of victims and survivors, incorporating the outcomes of co-design projects.
- Finalise the co-design process for the development of school-based curricula for supporting child sexual abuse disclosures, pilot and evaluate.
- Finalise resources for facilitating and supporting disclosures across the lifespan of victims and survivors and disseminate to all key stakeholders.
- Collaborate with the National Office, ACCCE, the eSafety Commissioner, Health Services, Child Protection Services, Out of Home Care Providers, Aged Care Services, Disability Services, Education Providers and others to incorporate our findings on disclosures into broader awareness raising and prevention initiatives in the community.

- Seek to fund additional research projects that explore patterns of disclosures across the lifespan of victims and survivors in shaping better responses to victims and survivors of child sexual abuse.
- Incorporate relevant research outcomes as they become available into practice-ready tools and resources and distribute them.
- Use the results of knowledge-building efforts regarding disclosures to further our collaboration with higher education, vocational providers and professional bodies to develop curricula addressing the support needs of victims and survivors of child sexual abuse, across the lifespan around disclosure.

What we will focus on in Years 4-5

- Continue to roll out learning materials and opportunities about disclosure across the lifespan of victims and survivors.
- Incorporate relevant research outcomes as they become available into practice-ready tools and resources and distribute them.
- Support the rollout of school-based curricula in partnership with jurisdictions and independent schools' systems.
- Commission research examining survivor experiences of disclosures and responses to their needs at the time and subsequently.
- Continue the collaborations with the National Office, ACCCE, Health Services, Child Protection Services, Out of Home Care Providers, Aged Care Services, Disability Services, Education Providers and others to incorporate our findings on disclosures into broader awareness raising and prevention initiatives in the community.

What success will look like

- The community is better equipped to identify grooming and child sexual abuse online and offline across the lifespan of victims and survivors.
- Children and young people and adults from diverse communities and backgrounds feel safer to disclose and are better supported when they do disclose and raise concerns.
- Child sexual abuse education programs support environments that facilitate children and young people to experience positive and effective responses to disclosures of child sexual abuse when they occur.



Challenge 4

Children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour require adults to better understand and meet their needs.

Children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour receive inconsistent responses, often exacerbating their stigma and shame further. The level of support offered to children and young people can vary widely according to geography and resourcing levels available locally.

Whilst therapeutic interventions are critical to support children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours, it is important to reduce the risk of such behaviour continuing and for adults in their network to understand their role in supporting the vulnerabilities these children and young people frequently experience and face. Addressing these issues is critical to intervening in child sexual abuse.

The change we want to see

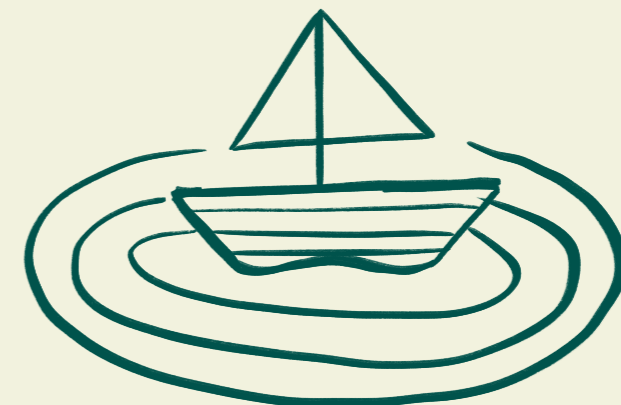
We better support children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour, so they receive the support they need to stop the behaviour. We better resource the important adults for these children so they are equipped to understand and support the children. There is greater community awareness and understanding of harmful sexual behaviour and a greater understanding amongst service providers and the community about how trauma and other relational and developmental disruptions can contribute to the emergence of harmful sexual behaviour in children and young people.

What we will do over the next five years

The National Centre will support changes in understanding, practice and service access needed to improve outcomes for children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour. The National Centre will also develop resources and support responses which are culturally inclusive and responsive for First Nations children and young people and their families, gender-diverse children and young people, children and young people with disability, and CALD children and young people.

What we will focus on in Year 1

- Through the National Centre's leadership role on the National Clinical Reference Group¹³ (NCRG), support the development of a common definition and framework for understanding harmful sexual behaviour – what it is, how it develops, its risks, and the ways it affects children and young people, their families and communities.
- Through membership on the NCRG, inform the design and development of a national framework for understanding, responding to and preventing harmful sexual behaviour, including establishing common and consistent language and terminology; developing National Standards to respond to and prevent harmful sexual behaviour; and creating a National Clinical and Therapeutic Framework to support health professionals providing treatment to children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour.
- Undertake research to build the evidence base and develop a better understanding of the diversity of children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour, identify effective and or emerging practice responses, and gain an understanding of how best to tailor assessment tools, therapeutic interventions and clinical frameworks. This research and other initiatives to address this challenge will also contribute to and inform work under the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030.
- Contribute to amplifying the existing work of the Australian Child Maltreatment Study to measure the prevalence and consequences of harmful sexual behaviour by children and young people.
- Identify and commission research that extends knowledge about harmful sexual behaviour, its precursors and effective approaches to support and intervention.
- Translate knowledge and understanding of all forms of harmful sexual behaviour, including children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour towards a sibling, to assist case providers, practitioners and services to deliver or improve service responses to children and young people and their families, carers, kin and other support networks.
- Work in partnership with First Nations leaders, practitioners and experts to ensure the needs of First Nations children and young people, children and young people with disabilities, CALD children and young people, and children and young people who are neurodiverse, are met and inform the development of the harmful sexual behaviour measures under the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030.
- Support the development and evaluation of culturally appropriate assessment and support programs for First Nations children and young people, their families and communities.
- Support the development and evaluation of developmentally relevant assessment and support programs for children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour living with specific needs and in specific contexts.
- Benchmark community understanding about harmful sexual behaviour through the National Centre community attitudes survey to inform initiatives to raise awareness about harmful sexual behaviour.
- Collaborate with jurisdictions to develop policy and legislative responses to children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour and their important adults that take account of their unique needs, including their own experiences of trauma.





Challenge 4 continued

What we will focus on in Years 2-3

- Incorporate relevant research outcomes as they become available into practice-ready tools and resources and distribute them. Disseminate the definition and framework developed to stakeholders including government, practitioners and services, education providers and community.
- Seek to fund additional research projects about shaping responses to children who displayed harmful sexual behaviour.
- Work in partnership with First Nations leaders, practitioners and experts to develop the knowledge base that supports building meaningful understanding of First Nations children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour to ensure the alignment of effective treatment approaches to the needs of the cohort and support prevention activities.
- Build partnerships with government, researchers and communities to support a coordinated approach to the measurement and tracking of the prevalence of children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour.
- Deepen collaborations with jurisdictions to develop policy and legislative responses to children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour that take account of their unique needs, including their own experiences of trauma.
- Support the design of harmful sexual behaviour community education/action campaigns that address critical contextual and messaging considerations.
- Make contemporary knowledge available to build the capability and capacity of general and specialist workforces to strengthen effective responses to children and young people who have engaged in and experienced harmful sexual behaviour.
- Continue to conduct the community attitudes study and use its results to define messages to raise awareness of and increase understanding about harmful sexual behaviour.
- Support the evaluation of approaches that are effective in addressing the needs of children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour and their network of important adults.

What we will focus on in Years 4-5

- Incorporate relevant research outcomes as they become available into practice-ready tools and resources and distribute them.
- Seek to fund ongoing research that generates contemporary knowledge about what is effective in supporting children and young people who have engaged in harmful sexual behaviour and their network of important adults.
- Continue to collaborate with jurisdictions to embed policy and legislative responses to children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour that take account of their unique needs, including their own experiences of trauma.
- Continue to conduct the community attitudes study and use its results to refine and target messages regarding harmful sexual behaviour.

What success will look like

- The language which describes harmful sexual behaviour is consistent, shared and informed by an understanding of trauma and child development.
- There is greater consistency and coordination in the measures used to track trends about harmful sexual behaviour.
- There is an evidence base that supports development of consistent approaches to treatment and support.
- A better understanding of harmful sexual behaviour and its effects on different family members informs improvements to policy, practice and service responses.
- A robust evidence base informs improvements to policy, practice and service responses.
- Workforces have access to nationally consistent, evidence informed and knowledge-based treatment and support approaches.





Challenge 5

Victims and survivors of child sexual abuse are often unable to access the **support** and **resources** that meet their changing needs at different times in their lives.

Victims and survivors of child sexual abuse cannot access the support and responses they need, when and where they need them. A better skilled workforce and better informed community create real and ongoing opportunities to support victims and survivors of child sexual abuse to heal and recover, better meeting their diverse needs at different times throughout their lifespan.

The change we want to see

It is easier for victims and survivors to receive the support they need, when and where they need it, to live well and heal. Health and ageing, community and justice systems are more aware and responsive to people who have experienced child sexual abuse and their complex and compounding trauma. We will work to ensure that victims and survivors are supported to seek and receive the type of support they need to facilitate the process of healing and recovery, including holding perpetrators to account.

What we will do over the next five years

The National Centre will integrate the insights and expertise of those with lived and living experiences of child sexual abuse to build the capability of systems, the workforce and community to know what works, and better meet the needs of victims and survivors from diverse backgrounds and contexts and at different times of their lives, to heal and recover.

What we will focus on in Year 1

- Partner with people with lived and living expertise of child sexual abuse to analyse and map the service needs of victims and survivors and their families across their lifespan, including from diverse cohorts.
- Establish core workforce capabilities required across sectors and services responding to child sexual abuse and complex trauma related to child sexual abuse and partner with higher education, vocational providers and professional bodies to address these.
- Use the results of the training needs analysis to design and deliver practice guides, tools, learning materials and opportunities that inform professional responses to victims and survivors which are safe, effective, protective, trauma-informed, culturally safe and developmentally sensitive.

- Identify and commission research that extends knowledge about victims and survivors, so they are provided with the support that meets their particular needs, at different times in their lives.
- Collaborate to support the development of pathways to community-based supports for victims and survivors, including from diverse cohorts.
- Incorporate the knowledge offered by survivors regarding their lived and living experience of the child protection and justice systems in processes to address the existing challenges and limitations of the current systems and enhance the experiences and outcomes of those engaging with them.
- Support processes to report on progress against the Royal Commission recommendations and other reforms.

What we will focus on in Years 2-3

- Drawing on the work completed in Year 1, develop a strategy to build workforce capability to provide evidence-informed, culturally appropriate responses that support healing and recovery, including with people who experience additional barriers to engagement.
- Drawing on the work completed in Year 1, develop an evidence-informed framework to build service provider capability to co-design, quality assure and evaluate their programs within a framework of continuous improvement.
- Support the evaluation of service provision, including methodologies that embed the perspectives of victims and survivors of child sexual abuse.
- Support trauma-informed change within the justice system which enables survivors of child sexual abuse to proceed through a survivor-centric justice process which upholds their human rights, minimises the risks of additional trauma, and ensures perpetrator accountability.
- Seek to fund additional research projects that extend knowledge about the support victims and survivors need to best meet their particular needs, at different times in their lives.
- Continue to support processes to report on progress against the Royal Commission and other reforms.
- Develop capability building tools for highly specialised roles within service systems to

- better meet the needs of victims and survivors of child sexual abuse across their lifespan.
- Support effective referral pathways from generalised to specialist services so that victims and survivors experience 'no wrong door' to accessing the services they need to heal and feel supported, at different times, across their lifespan.

What we will focus on in Years 4-5

- Disseminate the strategy and framework developed in Years 2 and 3 to relevant stakeholders and partner with them to drive implementation and coordination.
- Embed trauma-informed change within the justice system which enables survivors of child sexual abuse to proceed through a survivor-centric justice process which upholds their human rights, minimises the risks of additional trauma, and ensures perpetrator accountability.
- Continue to support processes to report on progress against the Royal Commission.

What success will look like

- Victims and survivors across diverse cultures and backgrounds, personal circumstances and vulnerabilities are better able to access safe and culturally safe community-based and justice responses, generalist and specialist services across their lifespan.
- Workforces across sectors better understand and respond to victim and survivor needs, including the specific needs of diverse groups to foster healing and recovery.
- Service providers have a greater capacity to quality assure, continuously improve, and evaluate their services and programs.
- Progress on system and practice improvement in meeting the needs of victims and survivors of child sexual abuse driven by the Royal Commission is sustained and expanded.



Challenge 6

Knowledge about complex and intergenerational trauma and dissociation does not generally inform responses to individuals with lived and living experiences of child sexual abuse.

The dynamics associated with child sexual abuse lead victims and survivors to experience ongoing effects of complex trauma in many areas of their lives which often vary over the course of time. Knowledge about complex trauma, intergenerational trauma and dissociation has led to deeper understanding of how to best support victims and survivors. Yet, this knowledge base is not fully integrated into service delivery and service system design. Victims and survivors and those around them will benefit from services and support that are more capable of using complex and intergenerational trauma and dissociation-informed approaches in practice, program design and service delivery.

The change we want to see

Victims and survivors are no longer stuck in a system driven by and delivering surface level responses because workforces are better equipped to respond to their needs.

What we will do over the next five years

The National Centre will integrate a deep understanding of the complex and intergenerational trauma consequences of and dissociative responses to child sexual abuse into the ways that services are designed and delivered. These different support and therapeutic responses will be contextualised depending on the gender, cultural backgrounds and diverse needs of victims and survivors.

What we will focus on in Year 1

- Develop and/or identify guidelines on complex and intergenerational trauma and dissociation in relation to child sexual abuse.

- Develop clear definitions regarding 'trauma', including complex and intergenerational trauma that support understanding the needs of victims and survivors, including clarity about a 'trauma-informed' approach and therapeutic practice.
- Develop accessible avenues for people with lived and living experience of child sexual abuse to provide information about their complex trauma experiences to help inform policy, service development and evaluation and research.
- Commission research to understand the relationship between prior victimisation, responses to it, intergenerational cycles of child sexual abuse in families and communities, and associated offending and victimisation.
- Build and translate knowledge about the impact and cycles of intergenerational trauma associated with child sexual abuse and related traumas.
- Establish core workforce capabilities required across sectors and services responding to child sexual abuse and complex trauma related to child sexual abuse, including therapeutically.
- Support the development of trauma-informed policy, system and program design and transformational change processes to ensure victims and survivors' needs are understood and responded to appropriately. The policy will also have reference to the impacts on families, carers and friends of victims and survivors.
- Define knowledge "inclusively" so that cultural, traditional and survivor-led ways of healing are privileged as much as those determined through a scientific paradigm or practice-based insights.

- Work in partnership with First Nations leaders, practitioners and experts to prioritise efforts to co-design culturally appropriate responses to the needs of culturally diverse groups, including First Nations victims and survivors, families, carers and communities.
- Ensure that cultural knowledge is privileged as a legitimate evidence base from which design thinking for system, program and intervention approaches can be drawn.
- Support culturally appropriate approaches to research and evaluation of 'effectiveness' and outcomes.
- Use the outcomes of the training needs analysis to develop practice guides and resources and training opportunities regarding complex trauma, dissociation and intergenerational trauma in relation to child sexual abuse.

What we will focus on in Years 2-3

- Disseminate the guidelines developed in Year 1 to stakeholders, including government, practitioners and services, education providers and community.
- Collaborate with practitioners and service providers to ensure relevant knowledge about complex trauma, dissociation and intergenerational trauma is used to improve responses to victims and survivors, including therapeutically.
- Build a theory of change embedding a complex, dissociation and intergenerational trauma-informed approach into program/model design.
- Ensure that relevant knowledge about complex trauma, dissociation and intergenerational trauma is elevated in the formation and execution of public policy across all levels of government.
- Invest in position papers and critical reviews into the systems seeking to reform policy, legislation and system design to address fragmentation and delivers services that address the critical needs of victims and survivors using best practice approaches to support and therapeutic responses.
- Support the development of trauma-informed policy, system and program design and transformational change processes to ensure victims and survivors needs are understood and responded to appropriately.
- Continue to prioritise efforts to co-design culturally appropriate responses to the needs of First Nations victims, survivors, families, carers and communities.
- Continue to ensure that cultural knowledge is privileged as a legitimate evidence base from which design thinking for system, program and intervention approaches can be drawn.

- Continue to support culturally appropriate approaches to research and evaluation of 'effectiveness' and outcomes.
- Continue to address identified workforce capacity building needs.
- Review emerging workforce capacity building needs through subsequent training needs analysis research.

What we will focus on in Years 4-5

- Continue to support the development of complex, dissociation and intergenerational trauma-informed policy, system and program design and transformational change processes to ensure victims and survivors needs are understood and responded to appropriately.
- Continue to address identified workforce capacity building needs, including therapeutic responses.
- Review emerging workforce capacity building needs through subsequent training needs analysis research.
- Collate the research conducted in Years 2-3, report on its results and identify future research priorities.
- Continued investment in position papers and critical reviews into the systems seeking to reform policy, legislation and system design to address fragmentation and embracing service delivery that addresses the critical needs of victims and survivors using best practice approaches to support and therapeutic responses.
- Continue to ensure that cultural knowledge is privileged as a legitimate evidence base from which design thinking for system, program and intervention approaches can be drawn.
- Continue to support culturally appropriate approaches to research and evaluation of 'effectiveness' and outcomes.

What success will look like

- The language which describes complex and intergenerational trauma and dissociation is consistent and shared.
- A consistent and shared understanding of a trauma-informed approach informs holistic service responses to victims and survivors, enhances opportunities for healing and recovery, and minimises the risks for re-traumatisation.
- Knowledge about complex and intergenerational trauma and dissociation is readily available to the community.
- More services and practitioners are better equipped to meet the support and therapeutic needs of victims and survivors of child sexual abuse.



Challenge 7

Child sexual abuse will not be stopped unless there is a comprehensive framework for addressing the power dynamics and factors which enable it.

There is limited knowledge of the individual and societal attitudes and behaviours, and the socio-ecological factors, that create the conditions in which child sexual abuse occurs. An evidence-informed and integrated theory of change should form a collective and shared way of understanding how to stop child sexual abuse before it starts.

The change we want to see

Progress is made to stop child sexual abuse before it starts.

What we will do over the next five years

The National Centre will bring together local and international evidence and knowledge to inform a comprehensive framework for understanding the factors which enable child sexual abuse to occur in families, institutions and the community, in both online and offline contexts. It will mobilise efforts to reduce the prevalence of child sexual abuse.

What we will focus on in Year 1

- Convene a roundtable of local and international experts to consider the best ways to develop a comprehensive framework to support long-term efforts to reduce the prevalence of child sexual abuse.
- Commission research that reviews the available evidence and knowledge about individual and societal attitudes and behaviour that enable child sexual abuse.
- Communicate with key partners to confirm mutual understanding of roles, responsibilities, shared strategic priorities, and opportunities for collaboration.

What we will focus on in Years 2-3

- Develop a clear theory of change informed by lived and living experience to prevent child sexual abuse, online and offline.
- Test the theory of change with a cross-section of victims and survivors, other experts and stakeholders.

What we will focus on in Years 4-5

- Partner with stakeholders including government, education providers, and practitioners and services, to operationalise and embed the theory of change into initiatives being undertaken across systems.

What success will look like

- The National Centre has a framework to stop child sexual abuse before it starts which has realistic and effective short, medium and long-term goals.
- The theory of change is valued by stakeholders and integrated into national, state/territory and community prevention strategies (while acknowledging it is a living theory that will evolve in response to the changing evidence base and input from victims and survivors).

Future steps

Implementation of Here for Change - Five Year Strategy

As a young organisation representing a diverse group of victims and survivors, the National Centre recognises and shares the collective hope invested in it. To ensure that the National Centre can meet expectations and deliver on its goals, it intends to implement Here for Change - Five Year Strategy flexibly, to be open to change where necessary, and be adaptable and embrace new opportunities and avenues for addressing child sexual abuse.

With this in mind, Here for Change - Five Year Strategy will be implemented in accordance with an Implementation Plan that emphasises learning and improving as we go. This overarching document will be accompanied by more detailed annual work plans that can be adapted to the concrete circumstances of the National Centre and its stakeholders.

The Implementation Plan identifies:

- the actions we will take
- the outcomes we will achieve
- the timeframes we will meet
- the role we will play
- the initiatives with which we will align.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Here for Change - Five Year Strategy will be monitored and evaluated to inform ongoing learning and improvement. The National Centre's monitoring, evaluation and learning activities will be conducted in accordance with a framework currently under development and adhere to the following principles:

- participatory and collaborative
- development, trauma and healing-informed
- inclusive and culturally-safe
- rigorous and ethical
- relevant and translational.

Research Plan

The aim of the National Centre's Research Plan is to build an accessible and robust knowledge base that supports our efforts to address the seven key challenges identified. To achieve this, we will pursue four interrelated objectives:

- keep up to date with evidence
- undertake and commission high quality research and evaluations
- support the adoption of continuous improvement practices
- support effective dissemination and translation of evidence and research findings.

The National Centre will commission a minimum of \$3.38 million in research and evaluation projects to support its work. It will also undertake its own research and knowledge-building activities.





SECTION 6:

How you can contribute

Get involved with the National Centre

We recognise the importance of engaging broadly and collaborating to reduce duplication and build on the invaluable work already happening. Here are ways for you to become involved with the work of the National Centre:

Victims and survivors

Share your views and stories and collaborate with the National Centre through our website, Victim Survivor Colleges and other opportunities to contribute

Members of the community

Engage with the National Centre and its partners to develop a better understanding of child sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour

Policymakers

Collaborate with the National Centre to implement this strategy and related initiatives

Researchers

Partner with the National Centre to conduct research aligned with our strategy and research priorities

Philanthropy and corporate

Financially support the National Centre and its partners to achieve the ambitious goals laid out in this strategy

Services and practitioners

Engage with the National Centre to access professional development opportunities and support victims and survivors of child sexual abuse

Education and training

Partner with the National Centre to develop materials and programs that will increase community understanding of child sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour

If you would like further information about how to get involved with the National Centre, please contact us using the details provided.

Visit the National Centre's website

www.nationalcentre.org.au

Contact the National Centre

info@nationalcentre.org.au



References

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- ¹² Mathews B, Pacella R, Scott JG et al. The prevalence of child maltreatment in Australia: findings from a national survey. The Medical Journal of Australia Supplement. The Australian Child Maltreatment Study: National prevalence and associated health outcomes of child abuse and neglect 2023; 218 No6: S13-S18.
- ¹³ The National Clinical Reference Group provides expert advice on the design, implementation and evaluation of measures related to children and young people and harmful sexual behaviours. Members include health professionals and clinicians from across Australia with direct experience supporting and treating children and young people with harmful sexual behaviours and their families, as well as leading researchers with academic expertise in children and young people with harmful sexual behaviours, child sexual abuse, childhood development and childhood sexuality. The National Centre has a leadership role in this group as the co-chair of the NCRG.



National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse



The National Centre respectfully acknowledges and celebrates the many Traditional Owners of the lands throughout Australia and pay our respects to ancestors of this country and Elders past and present. We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culture and lore have existed within Australia continuously for 65,000 years.

We acknowledge the ongoing leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia and those who have and continue to work tirelessly to address inequalities and improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice outcomes for children and young people. The National Centre is committed to ensuring that the voices of those whose lives are affected by the decisions governments make should fundamentally inform those decisions. First Nations voices must be heard, raised and amplified through a Voice to Parliament. It is time for genuine and significant reform to progress healing through the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

We seek to honour the lived expertise of all survivors of child sexual abuse, harnessing all ages, cultures, abilities and backgrounds, and commit to substantially addressing the harm of child sexual abuse, now and well into the future. We recognise that there are children and young people today who are experiencing sexual abuse and dedicate ourselves to doing all we can to promote their effective protection and care.

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