
MEDIA RELEASE

26 MAY 2008

SAFE AND HEALTHY FAMILIES OFFER THE BEST PROTECTION FOR CHILDREN

FRSA welcomes the release of the Australian Government's Discussion Paper '*Australia's Children Safe and Well*' by Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin. The increasing rate of substantiated child abuse and neglect over recent years warrants national leadership as a matter of urgency.

"The development of a national framework provides the opportunity to better integrate State and Territory Government responses to child abuse and neglect with Commonwealth Government initiatives to support families and communities to be safe and healthy" said Samantha Page, Executive Director, FRSA.

"The most common forms of child abuse are emotional abuse and neglect. These forms of abuse usually occur in the context of problems in family relationships and family functioning where parents are unable to provide effective care to children. This is often the result of factors such as mental health issues, alcohol and substance abuse, financial stress, housing insecurity, locational disadvantage, family violence and a lack of relationship and communication skills."

"FRSA member organisations are at the frontline of child protection. They work to strengthen families, respond to risk factors and help families to navigate through difficult times. Resilient families, capable of 'bouncing back' after a setback and communicating when things get tough provide the best protection for children."

"FRSA will be seeking to engage in the consultation process, particularly to assist the Government to:

- Identify effective approaches to prevention
- Enhance support to families and children at risk
- Promote and support good parenting practices
- Strengthen collaboration across service sectors
- Improve responses to Indigenous children
- Contribute to the development of a national workforce strategy."

"One of the benefits of a national approach to this issue is the opportunity to 'join the dots' between child abuse, family violence and high levels of parental conflict. As we engage in the consultation process we will be seeking to work with the Australian Government to examine the intersect between the family law system and the child protection system."

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For further information about Family Relationship Services Australia visit www.frsa.org.au or contact FRSA on 02 6162 1811 or email communications@frsa.org.au.

Family Relationship Services Australia is the national peak body for over 100 family relationship service providers, operating in more than 400 locations across Australia. FRSA's vision is for an Australian society that is enriched through respectful relationships in all their diversity.