

Families and Communities Programme

Communities for Children Facilitating Partner

Community Strategic Plan

The Communities for Children Facilitating Partners (FP) Sub-activity

FPs are place-based and develop and facilitate a whole of community approach to support and enhance early childhood development and wellbeing for children from before birth to 12 years. FPs build on local strengths to meet local community needs and create capability within local service systems, using strong evidence of what works in early intervention and prevention as identified by the Families and Children Expert Panel. They collaborate with other organisations to provide a holistic service system for children and families. FPs fund other organisations (known as Community Partners) to provide services including parenting support, group peer support, case management, home visiting services and other supports to promote child wellbeing.

The Community Strategic Plan

The Community Strategic Plan (the Plan) supports FPs to set out a vision for their service area. It identifies the key needs and service gaps in the community, develops ways to better coordinate and collaborate and outlines priority areas and strategies to address need and improve outcomes for children and families.

The Plan should build on the extensive knowledge that FPs and their Committees have gained in working with their communities, often over long periods of time. This new Community Strategic Plan presents an opportunity to critically reflect on what is changing and what continues to be the strengths and challenges for your local community.

The Plan also reflects the Australian Government's commitment to civil society and an acknowledgement that it is only through everyone in a community working together that true change in outcomes and trajectories can be achieved. This includes governments, non-government organisations, academia, business and community members.

The Community Strategic Plan should be developed with the aim of achieving the Families and Children Activity Outcomes and the Communities for Children FP objectives. The objectives of the Communities for Children FP are outlined below, including the new objective around school transition and engagement.

- To improve the health and well-being of families and the development of young children, from before birth through to age 12 years, paying special attention to:
 - Healthy young families — supporting parents to care for their children before and after birth and throughout the early years;
 - Supporting families and parents — support for parents to provide children with secure attachment, consistent discipline and quality environments that are stable, positive, stimulating, safe and secure;
 - Early learning — provide access to high quality early learning opportunities in the years before school; provide early identification and support for children at risk of developmental and behavioural problems; assist parents with ways they can stimulate and promote child development and learning from birth; and

- School transition and engagement - support children and families to make a smooth transition to school and work with local schools to assist children and families with their ongoing engagement with school.
- To create strong child-friendly communities that understand the importance of children and apply this capacity to maximise the health, well-being and early development of young children at the local level.

Community Strategic Plan Guidance

All Facilitating Partners are required to provide a Community Strategic Plan by **1 April 2015** for each Service Area and will cover the period to 1 July 2019.

The Plan includes the following sections:

1. Communities for Children Facilitating Partner's Details
2. Community Informed Service Mapping
3. Community Engagement
4. Service Area Vision
5. Priority Areas

When developing your Plan, you should consider the following documents:

- Families and Children Guidelines Overview
- Communities for Children FP Operational Guidelines
- Your Families and Communities Programme Grant Agreement, especially Item B
- Families and Children Performance Framework
- Families and Children Programme Logic, and
- State, territory and local government policies, plans and services

FPs will likely generate a substantial amount of valuable information as they develop their Plan. However, as part of the Department's commitment to reducing reporting requirements, FPs can limit responses to **one page per section** and **one page per priority area**.

The Plan must be developed in conjunction with your Communities for Children Committee and signed by an authorising officer in your organisation before it is submitted to your Grant Agreement Manager for review.

Please contact your Grant Agreement Manager if you need assistance developing your Plan or if you may have difficulty in meeting the due date. Other useful information resources include:

- [Factsheet on the Families and Children Expert Panel](#)
- [Factsheet on Collaboration](#)
- [Closing the Gap on Indigenous Disadvantage](#)
- [Closing the Gap: National Indigenous Reform Agreement](#)
- [The Toolkit for Indigenous Service Provision](#)
- [The Working and Walking Together handbook prepared by SNAICC](#)
- [The Engaging hard-to-reach families and children report by Natasha Cortis, Ilan Katz and Roger Patulny](#)
- [The Family Relationship Services Australia \(FRSA\) What Helps and Hinders, FRSA Linkages and Collaboration Project Report](#)
- [Interagency Collaboration by the Australian Institute of Family Studies](#)
- [Promising Practice Profiles at the Australian Family Relationships Clearinghouse by the Australian Institute of Family Studies](#)
- [Creating Conditions for Collective Impact](#)

Communities for Children Facilitating Partner's Details

Facilitating Partner Details

Service Area Name	Raymond Terrace-Karuah
FP Name	The Smith Family
FP Contact Name	Alison Harwood
FP Contact Title	Project Manager Communities for Children Raymond Terrace-Karuah
Address	c/o Raymond Terrace Public School Adelaide Street Raymond Terrace PO Box 10500 Raymond Terrace
State/Territory and Postcode	NSW 2324

Community Strategic Plan

Date Communities for Children Committee agreed to Community Strategic Plan	18 February 2015
Name of Facilitating Partner Authorising Officer	Sulabha Pawar National Manager Government and Community Projects
Signature of Facilitating Partner Authorising Officer	SULABHA PAWAR

DSS Use

Date of Submission to DSS	2 March 2015
Date of DSS approval	
DSS Delegate Name	
DSS Delegate Position	
DSS Delegate Signature	

1. Community-Informed Service Mapping

Note this Community Strategic Plan addresses the suburbs of Raymond-Terrace, Karuah, Tanilba Bay and Lemon Tree Passage within the Port Stephens LGA, and Tea Gardens and Hawks Nest within the Great Lakes LGA, as identified in the Service Agreement between The Department of Social Services and The Smith Family as Facilitating Partner.

The suburbs of Woodville, Seaham, Medowie and Williamtown identified in the Service Agreement were not determined to demonstrate significant vulnerability relative to the above areas across a range of indicators.

Developmental and educational vulnerabilities

There are significant vulnerabilities within the AEDC particularly for children in Raymond Terrace, Tanilba Bay and Lemon Tree Passage. In Raymond Terrace 33% of children are vulnerable on one or more domain compared with 22% in the Port Stephens LGA and; 17% are vulnerable on two or more domains compared with 11% in Port Stephens. Domains of particular concern are Social competence; Emotional maturity, and; Language and cognitive skills. In Tanilba Bay – Lemon Tree Passage, 34% of children are vulnerable on one or more domain and 17% on two or more domains. Fewer than 50% of children are on track in the Physical health and wellbeing domain. In the Social competence domain 12% more children are vulnerable than in NSW. In the Communication skills domain just over 50% are on track, compared with 75% in NSW and 71% in Port Stephens¹.

Aboriginal children are more likely to be educationally vulnerable both in the early years and at primary school. The numbers of Aboriginal children “on track” within the AEDC has fallen across most domains but particularly: Communication skills and general knowledge (where 80% were on track in 2009 but just 57% were on track in 2012), and; Social competence (where there was a fall from 74% to 59% on track). Schools report that the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children is widening as represented in AEDC and NAPLAN data².

Community consultations identified that there are relatively low rates of enrolment or low attendance in early learning and care by Aboriginal children and vulnerable children. The exception is Karuah where it was reported that all preschool aged children are enrolled. Teaching through culture and culturally-rich learning environments were highlighted as being necessary for the engagement of Aboriginal children and their families. Some pre-schools have strong cultural elements within their service and their curriculum, but require support to increase engagement with Aboriginal families and vulnerable families.

Speech and language issues were identified as being of major significance in the early and primary school years, specifically expressive and receptive language disorder. The schools, preschools and services sector has limited capacity around early identification and intervention strategies, although one school was trialling a volunteer-based intervention with primary school children, and several preschools and schools engaged speech pathologists to some extent. Given the limited specialist services available, long wait lists, onerous travel and sometimes high costs, there is a gap in support for ongoing interventions at home and in educational settings.

Physical health and wellbeing

Children and families in our community experience vulnerabilities in relation to physical health and wellbeing. Data for Port Stephens identifies high rates of overweight and obesity (62%) low rates of fruit and vegetable consumption (62% and 90%); high rates of physical inactivity (73%); high rates of smoking including mothers smoking during pregnancy (50% of

¹ Australian Early Development Index 2009 and 2012, A Snapshot of Early Development in Australia

² Australian Early Development Index 2012, Community Profile: Port Stephens

Aboriginal mothers in the Hunter Medicare Local area), and; low birth weight babies (15% of Aboriginal babies in the Hunter Medicare Local area)³. Poor diet and limited physical activity were strong themes identified through community consultation. Barriers to physical activity included perceptions of public safety, limited facilities, and cost. Conversely, physical play and recreation is reported to be highly valued by children and their parents/ carers.

In our community there are several services which embed 'healthy lifestyle' messages within broader activities such as parenting programs and playgroups. There are also some dedicated activities such as the NSW Government's *Go for Fun* and *Crunch and Sip*, and the Cancer Council's *Eat It To Beat It*. There is a need to review how best to engage families in the context of vulnerability and disadvantage and to identify both evidence-informed/ evidence-based interventions and opportunities for innovation in this area. There is also some evidence that engaging parents/ carers as well as children results in better outcomes.

Limited educational attainment and high unemployment

High rates of unemployment, low incomes and low rates of educational attainment exist across our community, with particular vulnerability in Karuah, Tea Gardens, Hawks Nest and Raymond Terrace. 53% of two parent families in Hawks Nest - Tea Gardens are jobless, and the unemployment rate in Karuah is 10%⁴.

Low incomes resulting from unemployment or unreliable employment is impacting family functioning and outcomes for children as identified through consultation including with Job Services Australia and parents/ carers.

Factors that may be exacerbating the impacts of low incomes and educational levels on children and families include physical isolation and lack of transport particularly in Tea Gardens, Hawks Nest, Tanilba Bay and Lemon Tree Passage; and significant housing insecurity in Tea Gardens and Hawks Nest due to seasonal holiday lettings.

Parents and carers identified 'employment' and 'financial security' as high priorities for their families and expressed a desire to improve their education and/ or employability skills. Activities that support this in the context of vulnerability and disadvantage are needed. These should include 'scaffolding' of supports for parents/ carers for example in relation to trauma, parenting and family functioning. This may represent a more integrated approach with Job Services Australia, adult training and education providers, and child and family services.

³ Medicare Local 2013, Hunter Medicare Local 2013 Needs Assessment Public Component

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011, Census of Population and Housing

2. Community Engagement

Communities for Children Raymond Terrace - Karuah has been operating since 2004. Building on existing community knowledge, The Smith Family as the Facilitating Partner recently undertook extensive data collection and community consultation to ensure that the 2015-2019 **Community Strategic Plan (CSP)** addresses community needs and reflects the aspirations of the community. The community consultation methodology included surveys, workshops and interviews with parents, businesses and other stakeholders, as well as creative activities with children to get their perception and feedback. This process was supported by the CfC Committee and led to the active engagement of 118 children, 68 parents/ carers, 47 service providers and businesses, and 16 education providers in the CfC FP planning process.

The CfC Committee continues to guide, advise and inform CfC FP planning, community relevance and responsive implementation. The Committee is a forum of stakeholders in executive and leadership roles. It meets bi-monthly and is the basis for the Collective Impact coalition. Membership includes community members including parents/carers and community influencers, business representatives, school principals, child and family service providers, relationship service providers and government agencies.

The Facilitating Partner is a member of various community and service provider networks which support sector engagement and capacity building. Two such important networks are:

Port Stephens Child and Family Network is a broad network of schools, services and government agencies focussed on information sharing and referrals with the aim of supporting child safe and child friendly communities.

Port Stephens Education and Employment Interagency is convened by Port Stephens Council and aims to improve the coordination and communication between education and training providers and other support agencies; to increase the community's ability to access learning opportunities, and; to develop a formal learning community framework.

To ensure the ongoing participation of the Civil Society in CfC FP Raymond Terrace – Karuah, the Facilitating Partner and the CfC Committee are exploring various community engagement strategies to be implemented more broadly from July 2015. In this, the CfC FP is mindful of the need to avoid duplication with existing forums, and to ensure clarity of purpose for participating stakeholders. These strategies are intended to ensure that CfC FP continues to be informed by the needs and aspirations of the community:

CfC FP Parent and carer forum which is inclusive of people with lived experience and provides the basis for mutual feedback between CfC FP and the community. Meetings will be interactive and held in appropriate community settings. This will also provide an opportunity for increased engagement with families in new areas of service provision (Tea Gardens, Hawks Nest, Tanilba Bay and Lemon Tree Passage).

CfC FP Children's activities engaging primary school aged children for example through online surveys and creative discussion activities. Meetings will be held in child friendly spaces such as schools.

Raymond Terrace Chamber of Commerce supports business engagement and networking. The CfC FP will investigate becoming a member of the Chamber.

Karuah Interagency and **Karuah Working Together (KWT)** are respectively agency and community forums supporting information sharing and cooperation. The CfC FP is currently the lead of the Interagency, and will attend KWT meetings.

CfC FP will also investigate engagement with Royal Australian Air Force Families (RAAF) families across the community in recognition of the particular context and challenges experienced by these families such as high mobility and rates of parental absence.

Attached: CfC Committee membership list and Terms of Reference

4. Service Area Vision

VISION

Our community is smart, strong and skilled. It is a place where stars are born.

The Vision for Raymond Terrace and Karuah CfC FP demonstrates the desire of the CfC Committee and the broader community to take a place responsive, strength based and inclusive approach to support children 0-12 years and their families in our community.

This Vision is a reflection of the extensive community consultation undertaken by The Facilitating Partner. Specifically, responses to the following questions guided the Visioning exercise:

- “What are your visions for your community”
- “What are your hopes and dreams for your family”

The top priorities for children were play and activities with family, more natural spaces, more friends, cooking and eating together as a family. The priorities for parents/ carers were happiness, health, a good education, success, employment, financial security and safety.

One respondent stated that their Vision for the community was that it was “a place where stars are born” and this comment was thought to reflect the aspiration of most citizens in the community.

3. Priority Areas

Priority Area One ~ My Smart Community: Quality early childhood development, education and care, and; success at school

This priority is informed by the education vulnerabilities identified in the AEDC and NAPLAN data and through consultation. Children in Raymond Terrace, Tanilba Bay and Lemon Tree Passage are particularly vulnerable in specific AEDC domains, with approximately one third of children vulnerable on one or more domain. The gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children upon commencing school and once at school is widening. In one AEDC domain (Communication skills and general knowledge) the percentage of on-track Aboriginal children has dropped by 23% from 2009 to 2012⁵, and several school principals commented that NAPLAN data was indicating an increasing gap in some areas. Healing programs (for adults), learning through culture, and involvement in schools and education were identified as priorities by families. Supporting children including in relation to trauma and speech/language are priorities for schools and services.

Priority locations are Raymond Terrace and Tanilba Bay - Lemon Tree Passage. Tea Gardens and Hawks Nest would be investigated.

Outcomes and objectives

Families and Children Activity's outcome: Improved child wellbeing; Increased parental capacity; Increased service integration and collaboration; Improved access for vulnerable or disadvantaged individuals and families

Communities for Children FP objectives: *Objective 1* - To improve the health and well-being of families and the development of young children, from before birth through to age 12 years, paying special attention to: **Early learning** — provide access to high quality early learning opportunities in the years before school; provide early identification and support for children at risk of developmental and behavioural problems; assist parents with ways they can stimulate and promote child development and learning from birth; and **School transition and engagement** - support children and families to make a smooth transition to school and work with local schools to assist children and families with their ongoing engagement with school

Under this Priority we would:

Funded direct service delivery for activities such as: Enhanced early years networks across early education providers, service providers and Primary Stage 1 teachers; Learning through culture and cultural elements in early years contexts; Facilitated access for families to quality early education environments; Facilitated access for families to specialist services including speech and language services; Build capacity of parents/ carers and staff around speech and language interventions; Trauma informed coaching for staff and organisational capacity building; Parenting support including healing programs that enable increased engagement in their child's development and learning.

Build professional capacity through Facilitating Partner learning and development support to service system in relation to trauma-informed and culturally-safe practice with a focus on coaching strategies.

Build sector capacity through Facilitating Partner support in relation to: Enhanced integration of early year's networks, and; Enhanced integration between specialist health services and child and family services.

⁵ Australian Early Development Index 2012, Community Profile: Port Stephens

Outcomes measurement: Client outcomes measured through observation and surveys (pre and post service) as per DSS data collection; AEDC, NAPLAN and other education data at appropriate scales will measure contribution to change over time.

Key stakeholders:

- Children aged 0-5 and their families; Children 0-12 and their families
- Aboriginal organisations and services
- Preschools, schools and child and family services
- NSW Department of Education and Communities (preschools and primary schools)
- NSW Department of Family and Community Services

Priority Area Two ~ My Strong Community: physical health and wellbeing

This priority is informed by a range of health risk factors where vulnerabilities were identified across the community for example high rates of overweight/ obesity (62%), and high rates of physical inactivity (73%)⁶. There are significantly higher rates of mother's smoking during pregnancy in Port Stephens than in NSW⁷, with 50% of Aboriginal mothers smoking during pregnancy and 15% of Aboriginal babies being low birth weight⁸.

Families identified 'health' and 'having more family time together' as high priorities. Children and parents/ carers reported that physical activities such as walking, swimming, cooking and eating together as a family are important. Community consultation also identified barriers to physical activity for example cost and amenity.

Priority locations are Raymond Terrace, Karuah, Tea Gardens and Hawks Nest.

Outcomes and objectives

Families and Children Activity outcome: Improved child adult and family wellbeing; Improved child wellbeing; Improved access for vulnerable or disadvantaged individuals and families

Communities for Children FP objectives: *Objective 1* - To improve the health and well-being of families and the development of young children, from before birth through to age 12 years, paying special attention to: **Healthy young families** - supporting parents to care for their children before and after birth and throughout the early years; *Objective 2* - To create strong child-friendly communities that understand the importance of children and apply this capacity to maximise the health, well-being and early development of young children at the local level.

Under this Priority we would:

Funded direct service delivery for activities such as: Supporting access to affordable fresh food; Food handling and cooking skills; Shopping and budgeting skills; Activities in local play and recreation spaces for example 'pop-up playgrounds'; Low-cost/ no-cost physical activities; Facilitated access and supported referrals to specialist health services.

Build professional capacity through Facilitating Partner learning and development support to services providers in relation to early identification of health risk factors (such as smoking during pregnancy, poor infant diet and nutrition and low physical activity) and strategies for service providers to effectively address these with families.

Build sector capacity through Facilitating Partner support in relation to: Enhanced and supported referral pathways; Enhanced integration of health services (general and specialist) and child and family services, preschools and schools.

Outcomes measurement: Client outcomes measured through observation and surveys (pre and post service) as per DSS data collection; Health data if available at appropriate scale will indicate contribution made over time.

Key stakeholders

- Children aged 0-12 and their families
- Health providers
- Preschools, schools and child, family and disability services
- Local Government including Assets and Recreation divisions
- NSW Department of Family and Community Services

⁶ Medicare Local 2013, Hunter Medicare Local 2013 Needs Assessment Public Component

⁷ NSW Perinatal Data Collection, Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence, NSW Ministry for Health, accessed 26 November 2014

⁸ Medicare Local 2013, Hunter Medicare Local 2013 Needs Assessment Public Component

Priority Area Three ~ My Skilled Community: education, training and employment support for parents/carers of children 0 to 12 years

This priority was informed by data that indicates high rates of unemployment (10% in Karuah), high rates of joblessness (53% of two couple families in Tea Gardens - Hawks Nest), low incomes (38% of individuals in Karuah receive less than \$300 per week), and low rates of educational attainment (4% tertiary education in Karuah and 6% in Hawks Nest – Tea Gardens)⁹. This data is reflected in the SEIFA index, where Karuah for example is ranked 151 and Raymond Terrace is ranked 302 in Australia in terms of economic and educational vulnerability¹⁰. Consultation data strongly indicates that education, employment, income and financial security are high ranking needs and priorities as identified by parents/carers and service providers.

This exists in the context of some economic and employment downturn across the Hunter Region of NSW in recent years including in mining and related industries and manufacturing, and changes to the vocational training sector including TAFE. In this context there is an opportunity to support the education and employment aspirations within our community through a scaffolded approach that recognises the lived experience of families, including low incomes, and to influence attitudes to work and study through the application of early intervention and prevention approaches to service delivery.

Priority locations are Karuah, Raymond Terrace and Tea Gardens – Hawks Nest.

Outcomes and objectives

Families and Children Activity's outcomes: Increased economic engagement; Improved adult functioning; Increased service integration and collaboration; Improved access for vulnerable or disadvantaged individuals and families

Communities for Children FP objectives: Objective 1 - To improve the health and well-being of families and the development of young children, from before birth through to age 12 years, paying special attention to: **Supporting families and parents** — support for parents to provide children with secure attachment, consistent discipline and quality environments that are stable, positive, stimulating, safe and secure

Under this Priority we would:

Fund direct service delivery for activities such as: Cultural programs and learning through culture; Healing programs; Support for parenting and family functioning; Aspiration-supporting programs; Supported technical and tertiary education programs; Supported employment skills programs.

Build professional capacity through Facilitating Partner learning and development support related to: Identifying and supporting family aspirations.

Build sector capacity building through Facilitating Partner support for enhanced integration of employment, education and training, and child and family services.

Outcomes measurement: Client outcomes measured through observation and surveys (pre and post service) as per DSS data collection.

⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011, Census of Population and Housing

¹⁰ Australia Bureau of Statistics 2011, Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas

Key stakeholders

- Parents/ carers of children aged 0-12 years
- Job Services Australia providers
- Local business and employers
- Australian Government Departments of Human Services and Employment
- NSW Department of Family and Community Services