



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Our draft Early Years Strategy

Easy Read version



How to use this document



The Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) wrote this document with the Department of Education (DE).

When you see the word 'we', it means DSS and DE.



We wrote this document in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.

Bold
Not bold

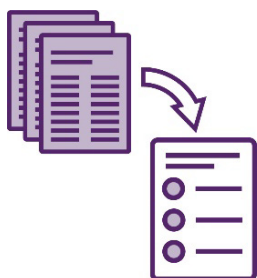
We wrote some words in **bold**.

This means the letters are thicker and darker.



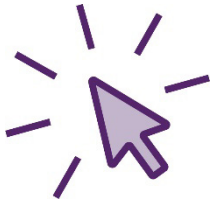
We explain what these words mean.

There is a list of these words on page **40**.



This is an Easy Read summary of another document.

This means it only includes the most important ideas.



You can find the other document on our website.

engage.dss.gov.au/early-years-strategy-2



You can ask for help to read this document.

A friend, family member or support person may be able to help you.

What's in this document?

About our draft Early Years Strategy	5
Why our Strategy is important	8
What children need when they are very young	12
Treating all children fairly and equally	16
How the Australian Government will support young children	18
How our Strategy will guide the Australian Government	20
Next steps	36
Tell us what you think about our Strategy	38
Word list	40

About our draft Early Years Strategy



We are making a plan to support young children in Australia from before they are born until they are 5 years old.

This includes:

- their families
- communities they live in.



We call it the Early Years Strategy.

In this document, we call it our Strategy.



This document explains a **draft** of our Strategy.



A draft is a document that isn't finished.

Some things in a draft might change later.

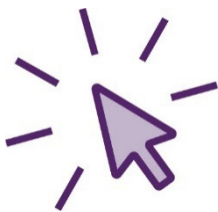


This might be because people tell us what needs to change in the draft.



We are working with the community to make our Strategy.

We asked the community to share their ideas about our Strategy with us.



You can read about what they shared on our website.

www.dss.gov.au/families-and-children-programs-services/early-years-strategy



You can share what you think should be in our Strategy.

You can find out how to contact us on page **38**.



Our Strategy focuses on the **wellbeing** of young children.

Wellbeing means children have:

- enough care and support
- what they need to be happy and healthy.



Our Strategy also works to protect and recognise the **rights** of young children.

Rights are rules about how people must treat you:

- fairly
- equally.



We are making our Strategy with:

- young children
- parents, families and carers
- communities.



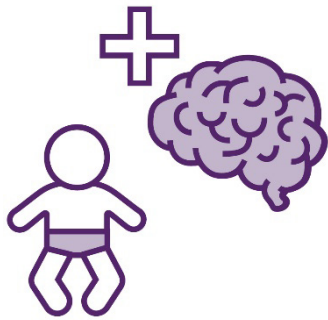
We are also working with:

- experts
- people and organisations who work with young children and their families.



We will publish the final Strategy in early 2024.

Why our Strategy is important



The first 5 years of a child's life are very important.

It is when their brains are most able to grow and develop based on what is happening around them.



It is also a time when we can support children to:

- learn
- feel good about who they are
- have a healthy body and mind.



If we focus on the first 5 years of a child's life, we can stop many problems before they begin.



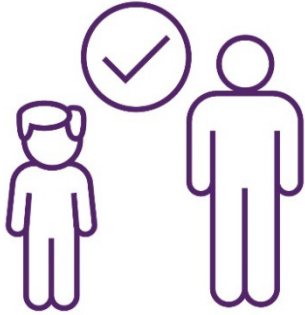
It also means we can have children who:

- are safe and happy
- can play and grow.



It means that families and carers feel:

- strong
- that their community supports them and their children.



We know that supporting young children as they grow helps them to do better later in life.

It helps them do better in areas like:



- connecting with others



- school



- their body and mind.



And children who go to preschool often do better when they start school.



Children who do well at school are more likely to stay in school and find a job.



If young children don't get enough support, it can affect their health and wellbeing.

This includes if families don't have what they need to support their children.



For example, if families:

- don't have enough money
- can't find and use the services they need.



But we don't just want to make the future better for children in Australia.

We also want children to have great childhoods.

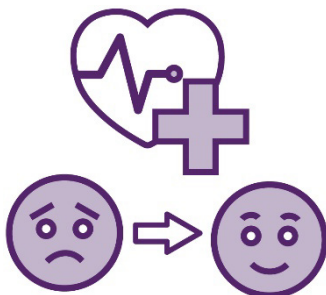


Childhood is a special time.

Children should have time to play.



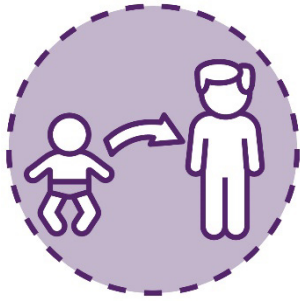
Children also bring joy to families and communities.



When people connect to young children, it can help:

- their health and wellbeing
- bring their stress down.

What children need when they are very young



The people and things around young children affect how they grow.

This includes their:

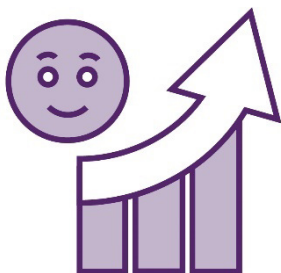


- family
- community
- **culture.**

A child's culture is:



- their way of life
- how they think or act now because of how they grew up
- their beliefs
- what is important to them.



We want all young children to have more good experiences and less bad experiences.



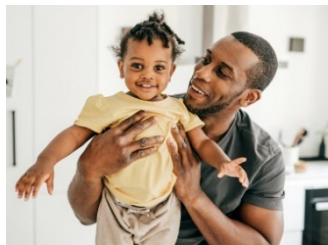
This makes it easier for young children to do better in life.

Young children told us they want to:



- play
- be in nature
- spend time with people who are important to them.

Being with parents or carers



The most important thing for a child is to have at least one good relationship with an adult.



A young child's parents and carers are their first and most important teachers.



A young child's home is the place where they learn their first lessons.

For example, how to read or count numbers.

Parents told us they:



- know they are important to their children
- want support to be a good parent
- need to be able to find and use the services they need.

Dealing with stress



It's important for children to have some stress in their life.



This is how they:

- learn how to deal with stress
- grow up in a healthy way.



But too much stress or stress over a long time can hurt the way a child's brain grows.

It can even affect how their body deals with being sick.

The community



The community is where young children and their families:

- live
- play
- grow.



The people in the community also play a part in supporting young children's health and wellbeing.

For example, their teachers and friends.

The places where young children get early education are also important to how they grow.



This could include their:

- family
- child care
- preschool.



The experiences young children have at child care and preschool can help with how they:

- communicate
- solve problems
- get along with other people.

Treating all children fairly and equally



We need to treat all children in Australia:

- fairly
- equally.

And make sure they have what they need to grow well.



We want all children in Australia to:

- live well
- have great futures
- grow into healthy adults
- be their best self.



Many children have a great start to life in Australia.

For example, many children are born healthy and have what they need to grow.

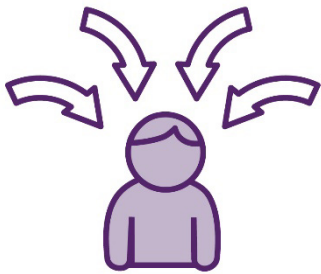


All children should have the same opportunities from the start.

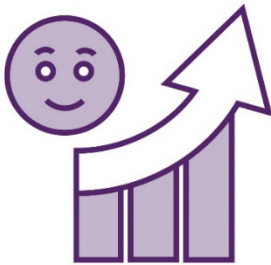


The places where children grow up shouldn't affect their health and wellbeing.

This includes if they live in places far away from cities.



We understand that many things can affect how a child grows up.



This is why we want children to have more good experiences than bad experiences.



We also understand that children and families need different supports at different times in their lives.

How the Australian Government will support young children



The Australian Government is already working to support young children as they grow up.



For example, the Australian Government delivers many programs and services:

- to support children and families
- in different places in Australia.



These include:

- health services
- playgroups and toy libraries
- wellbeing programs.



Our Strategy will help make sure different parts of the Australian Government work together to support young children across Australia.



It will also work with other plans the Australian Government has.



This includes plans to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

How our Strategy will guide the Australian Government

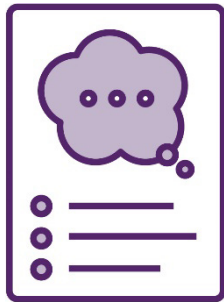


Our Strategy will guide all parts of the Australian Government to better support young children.

Our Strategy includes:



Our vision



Guiding principles



Outcomes



Focus areas

Our vision



Our **vision** is what we want for Australia's young children.



We want all children in Australia to:

- live well in their early years
- have strong futures.



We want their families to:

- feel confident to raise their children
- get the support they need
- be connected to their communities.



And we want communities across Australia to support young children and their families.

Guiding principles



Our Strategy has **guiding principles**.

Guiding principles are important ideas we should always think about.



The guiding principles explain how we will work to support young children and their families.

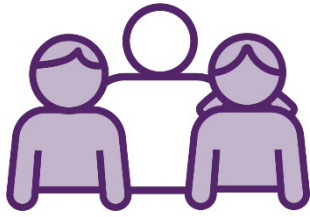


This includes:

- what we will do
- how we will make decisions.



There are 5 guiding principles.



1. Focus on children and their families

1



We will ask children and their families about what they need.

This will help us decide how we can help them best.



2. Focus on what children and their families can do

2



We will think about what young children and their families know.

This includes what they are able to do.



3. Respect families and the community

3



We will respect the way families and communities support young children.



4. Everyone can find and use supports and services

4



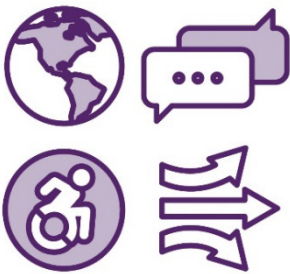
We will work to make sure all children and families can get the supports and services they need.



We will make sure our supports and services respect people's **diversity**.

Diversity is what makes people different from each other.

People can:



- come from different places
- speak different languages
- have different abilities
- live their lives in different ways.



5. Use evidence

5



We will use **evidence** to help us support young children and their families.

Evidence is proof that something works.

Outcomes



We will know we have achieved our vision for young children in Australia when we reach our **outcomes**.

Outcomes are important results we want to achieve.



Our Strategy has 8 outcomes.



1. Children are safe and have support

1



This means children get the support they need from their families and carers.

And they are safe from harm in their homes and communities.

It also means they can spend time with their:



- parents
- family
- friends.



2. Children are healthy

2



This means children are healthy in their body and mind.

It also means they can manage their feelings to get along well with other people.



3. Children are learning

3



This means children are able to build healthy brains and bodies from the time they are born.



4. Children feel good about who they are.

4

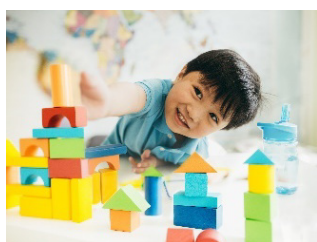
This means children can have good connections to the people around them, including their:



- families
- friends
- communities.

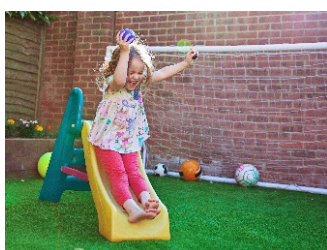


It also means children are connected over their lives to their family background and culture.



5. Children can play and imagine

5



This means children can play and express who they are in a creative way.



6. Children have what they need to live

6



This means children have the basic things that they need to live.



For example:

- food
- health care
- housing.



7. Families and carers are connected and have support

7



This means families and carers have support to give their children what they need.

And families and carers have the right skills and information to support young children.



8. Communities are places where young children and their families can grow and connect

8



This means communities are safe and happy places that welcome children and their families and carers.

And communities support children to connect to:



- other people
- nature
- playgrounds
- libraries.

Focus areas



Our Strategy also has areas we will focus on.

We call these areas our focus areas.



Our focus areas are the things we will work on to reach:

- our vision
- the outcomes.



Our Strategy has 4 focus areas.



1. Value the early years

1



We will share information about why early childhood matters so much.



This includes how important families and people who work with children are.



2. Support families and carers with skills and information

2



We will give families and carers information and resources to help them support young children to grow.



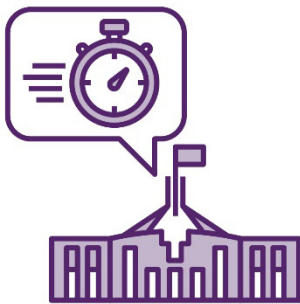
We will also help families and carers to connect with:

- other families
- their communities.



This can help them:

- share skills they have
- learn skills they need.



Australian Government supports and services will respond quickly to what all children and their families need.

We will also work towards making sure all children can get early learning.



Early learning lets young children:

- play and learn with other children
- get ready to start school.



3. Work with communities to support young children

3



We will work with communities to get better outcomes for young children.



This includes working with communities to solve problems that affect young children.



We will also listen to communities about what they need to help young children and their families.

This will help us decide what different communities need.



4. Have different parts of the Australian Government work together

4



We will make sure all of the Australian Government works together in a better way to support:

- young children
- their families.



We will also improve how we collect and use **data** to support young children and their families.

This includes data we use to report on how we are reaching the outcomes in our Strategy.



When we talk about data, we mean:

- facts
- information
- records.

Next steps



We are working with the community to learn what they think should be in our Strategy.



Our Strategy will start in early 2024.



We will make plans for how we will deliver our Strategy.

We call them our action plans.

We will make 3 action plans.



Our first action plan will start in 2024.



It will last for 3 years.



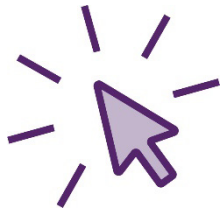
It will focus on what the Australian Government will do to work together better.

This includes how the Australian Government will share what it has done to deliver our Strategy.



We will report on how we deliver the action plans.

Tell us what you think about our Strategy



You can find out more about our Strategy on our website.

www.dss.gov.au/families-and-children-programs-services/early-years-strategy



You can call us.

1300 653 227



You can email us.

EarlyYearsEngagement@dss.gov.au



You can write to us.

Department of Social Services

Early Years Strategy

GPO Box 9820

Canberra

ACT 2601

Support to talk to us



You can call the National Relay Service if you:

- are deaf or hard of hearing
- find it hard to speak using the phone.



Teletypewriter (TTY)

1800 555 677



Speak and listen

1800 555 727



If you speak a language other than English, you can call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS).

131 450

Word list

This list explains what the **bold** words in this document mean.

Culture

A child's culture is:



- their way of life
- how they think or act now because of how they grew up
- their beliefs
- what is important to them.

Data

When we talk about data, we mean:



- facts
- information
- records.



Diversity

Diversity is what makes people different from each other.



Draft

A draft is a document that isn't finished.

Some things in a draft might change later.



Evidence

Evidence is proof that something works.



Guiding principles

Guiding principles are important ideas we should always think about.



Outcomes

Outcomes are important results we want to achieve.



Rights

Rights are rules about how people must treat you:

- fairly
- equally.



Vision

Our vision is what we want for Australia's young children.



Wellbeing

Wellbeing means children have:

- enough care and support
- what they need to be happy and healthy.



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