Today’s presentation

- Giving every child every chance
- The Best Interests Principles under the CYFA
- Earlier Intervention
- Strengthening the care and protection of vulnerable children
Giving every child every chance
Office for Children - Priorities

- Driving an outcomes focus – children’s health, safety, learning, development and wellbeing
- Knowing how children and young people are faring in Victoria
- Identifying where additional action may be required
- Understanding the extent to which existing programs are helping
- Co-ordinating and aligning action across Government
- Designing/reshaping 04C programs to improve outcomes
The Victorian outcomes framework describes our aspirations for all children.

Enabling society

Strong and supportive communities ... positive Peers

Confident and capable parents

Child who is safe, healthy, and continuing to develop, learn and achieve wellbeing.
Children and young people are provided the best possible start in life and families and communities are given the help they need to achieve this.
Two new pieces of legislation will guide actions of child, youth & family services

**Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005**
- Principles for service provision to children and families
- Victorian Children’s Council
- Children’s Services Coordination Board
- Child Safety Commissioner

**Children, Youth and Families Act 2005**
- Child Protection and community services
- Children’s Court
- Youth Justice

Replaces and modernises the *Children and Young Persons Act 1989* and the *Community Services Act 1970*

This document is managed by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Victoria (as of 27 August 2007)
The Child Wellbeing and Safety Act sets out principles for all child, youth & family services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy principles</th>
<th>Service design &amp; development</th>
<th>Service provision</th>
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</table>
| 1. Collective Social Responsibility for Children | • Early identification and early intervention  
• Local & cultural responsiveness & local & regional coordination  
• Targeting of appropriate and sufficient assistance to highest need  
• Quality improvement focused on meeting needs of children as they develop | • Promote child & family participation in decision-making  
• Respect for identity & individual circumstances/needs  
• Timely decision-making  
• Information & promotion of the service  
• Professional cooperation in the interests of the child and family. |
| 2. Opportunity to reach potential | | |
| 3. Outcomes focus | | |
| 4. Central importance of parents | | |
The Children Youth and Families Act will guide family, placement and child protection services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Components</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Best interests</td>
<td>Streamlining planning, with a stronger focus on child development &amp; stability</td>
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<td>Cumulative harm</td>
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<td>Leaving care</td>
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<td>Early intervention</td>
<td>Family Support Innovations expansion</td>
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<td>Child FIRST (community based intake)</td>
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<td>Information exchange</td>
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<td>Meeting children’s needs</td>
<td>Assessments – attachment, parental capacity, child development</td>
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<td>Therapeutic models of care</td>
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<td>Responding to sexually abusive children</td>
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<td>Strengthen Aboriginal service response</td>
<td>Building Aboriginal service capacity</td>
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<td>Strengthening cultural responsiveness</td>
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The Best Interests Principles of the CYFA
The Best Interests Principles in the CYFA provide specific guidance on promoting positive outcomes for vulnerable children & youth and families.
Promoting child-centred practice, with particular emphasis on stability and safety

Safety elements include:
- Sources of harm
- Pattern & history
- Opportunities for harm
- Parental attitudes to harm and to the child
- Parental relationship with child

Stability elements include:
- Connection to primary caregiver
- Connection to family
- Connection to school/friends
- Connection to community
- Connection to culture

Development elements are:
- Health & physical development
- Family and social relationships
- Education and learning
- Identity
- Emotional & behavioural development
- Self-care skills
- Social presentation

Culture, age and stage includes:
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse groups
- Infancy and pre-school years, primary school years, adolescence
As well as focusing on family-centred practice – which recognises the child’s experience in the context of their parents, family and community

**Parent/carer capability**
- Providing basic care
- Ensuring safety
- Emotional warmth and responsiveness
- Guidance and boundaries
- Consistency and reliability
- Stimulating learning and development

**Family composition and dynamics**
- Family composition and relationships
- Family history and dynamics
- Involvement of extended family with the child

**Community participation, social and economic environment**
- Housing, employment, income
- Family’s community participation
- Community resources
Key pieces of work underway to support a common understanding of the best interests principles

- Establishing a best interests framework for vulnerable children and youth
- Providing guidance on the theoretical underpinnings of the best interests principles, cumulative harm and stability
- Describing the key practice implications for each service
- Establishing a best interests assessment and case practice framework which builds on & broadens the Victorian Risk Framework
- Developing more detailed assessment and planning tools
- For Child Protection – establishing a single Best Interests Plan
Earlier Intervention
The Act builds on the Family Support Innovations Projects to support earlier intervention by family services.
A referral to Child FIRST may be the best way of connecting children, young people and their families to the services they need, where you have concerns for a child’s wellbeing due to:

- Significant parenting problems that may affect the child’s development
- Serious family conflict, including family breakdown
- Families are under pressure
- Young, isolated and/or unsupported families
- Significant social or economic disadvantage that may impact on a child’s care or development
Roll out of Child FIRST

- Child First Stage 1 Sites
  - Barwon SW  Colac-Otway and Corangamite
  - Geelong, Queenscliff and Surf Coast
  - Warrnambool, Moyne, Glenelg and Southern Grampians
  - Grampians Ballarat, Hepburn, Pyrenees, Moorabool, Golden Plains and Ararat
  - Horsham, Hindmarsh, Northern Grampians, West Wimmera, Yarriambiack
  - Hume Greater Shepparton, Strathbogie and Moira
  - Eastern Yarra Ranges, Knox and Maroondah
  - Southern Casey, Greater Dandenong and Cardinia
  - North and West Darebin, Yarra, Whittlesea, Banyule and Nillumbik

- Subsequent roll out will be aligned with expansion/mainstreaming of the Family Support Innovation projects.
Family services/Child Protection interface - now?
Child Protection - Child FIRST interface - in the future
Strengthening the care and protection of vulnerable children
The CYFA more explicitly authorises a broader focus on child wellbeing by Child Protection and Placement services

- A stronger focus on:
  - Child development
  - Cumulative harm
  - Promoting children’s stability
  - Keeping Aboriginal children connected to their community and culture
Key pieces of work underway....

- Review of the operating model for Child Protection, including updating tools and business practices:
  - Intake processes, including new reports on unborn children and feedback to reporters
  - Specialist assessment guides on child development, promoting stability, cumulative harm, neglect
  - Streamlining and integrating case planning processes and recording tools (protective and care and placement planning)
  - New responses to children exhibiting sexually abusive behaviors
  - Updating protocols/partnership agreements
    - Police protocol
    - RCH protocol
    - Best practice framework for acute health
  - Developing a court practice strategy
Key pieces of work underway....

- Establishing a program for comprehensive assessments of children entering care
- Piloting therapeutic foster care
- Reviewing supports for kinship carers
- Establishing step-down services for children exiting secure welfare
- Review of residential care services
Key pieces of work underway...

Implementing new quality assurance processes:

- 3 year registration of CSO’s against service standards
- Independent external reviews for re-registration
- Criteria for approval of foster carers & resi-care workers
- Formal responses to allegations of physical and sexual abuse in OOHC
Key pieces of work underway

• Aboriginal capacity building
  – Project positions in each ACCO
  – Supporting agencies to meet registration standards
  – Developing 5-year strategic plans in partnership with other local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal child and family services
  – Traineeships

• Connecting to communities
  – Aboriginal agencies managing placements of Aboriginal children
  – Exploring supports for Aboriginal kinship carers
  – Strengthening compliance with ACPP
  – Cultural supports plans for children in OoHC
Government has made a significant investment in implementation

**18.3% Growth for Child Protection and Family Services**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Four years</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early intervention and prevention</td>
<td>$52.33</td>
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<td>Greater stability for children in care</td>
<td>$27.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improved safety and wellbeing</td>
<td>$56.85</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aboriginal initiatives</td>
<td>$14.08</td>
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<tr>
<td>Funding announced with passage of legislation</td>
<td>$68.00</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$ 219 million</strong></td>
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*Creating Opportunities and Addressing Disadvantage*
*A Fairer Victoria, April 2005*
Implementation planning is occurring in partnership with agencies delivering services under the Act

- Act due to commence on March 14 2007
- Leadership forum, advisory groups and working parties meeting regularly to:
  - Resolve more detailed policies
  - Roll out new funds
  - Share learnings on managing cultural and practice change
- Joint training between CP and CSO’s will commence in November
- Training products and reference materials for other professionals are also under development
What does the CYFA mean for early childhood services?
## Major implications for early childhood services

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Area of reform</th>
<th>Implications</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Best Interests</td>
<td>CWSA &amp; CYFA promote an outcomes-focus. Shared responsibility for children’s safety, health, learning, wellbeing and development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Earlier intervention</td>
<td>Strong pathways and collaboration across the service continuum. Align planning, service development and service delivery.</td>
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<td>Cumulative harm</td>
<td>Developmental focus of MCH and kindergarten teachers critical in identifying and responding to cumulative harm.</td>
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<td>Children’s stability</td>
<td>Focus on inclusion in kindergarten important in strengthening children’s connection to friends and community. Providing positive adult relationships.</td>
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<td>Unborn children</td>
<td>MCH and maternity services critical partners in supporting mothers and identifying the needs of the child after birth.</td>
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<td>Court strategy</td>
<td>Expertise in child development may be sought to make stronger arguments to the court about children’s developmental needs.</td>
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<td>Information sharing</td>
<td>Information sharing authorisations more explicit. Strong focus on information provision to Child FIRST and Child Protection teams, but also feedback to referrers/reporters</td>
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<td>Agency Registration</td>
<td>A culture of quality is a high priority for all child and family services. The application of CYFA registration provisions to local governments delivering family services is under discussion.</td>
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Working together is rocket science