

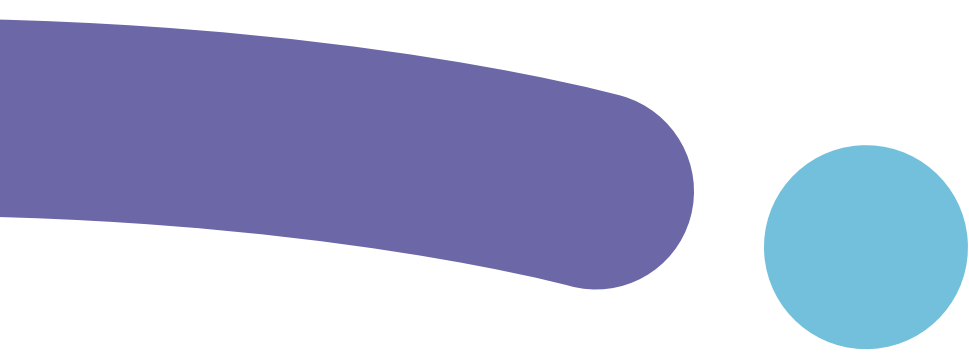
National Child & Family
Hubs Network



National Child and Family Hubs Network
Strategy 2024-2029

JULY 2024





National Child and Family Hubs Network Strategy 2024-2029

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The authors represent the National Child and Family Hubs Network (the Network). The Network is a multidisciplinary group that brings together Australian universities, research centres, medical research institutes, and state government departments. The Network's members are actively involved in conducting research, training, communication, and advocacy related to innovative (and sustainable) integrated community-based Hubs, to support the health and wellbeing of children and families.

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The Network would like to acknowledge and thank the Lived Experience Advisors whose expertise and generosity has shaped the National Child and Family Hubs Network Strategy 2024-2029.

The National Child and Family Hubs Network acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work and pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging. The National Child and Family Hubs Network recognises the strengths embedded in First Nations communities and vast experience providing holistic care for children, families and communities.

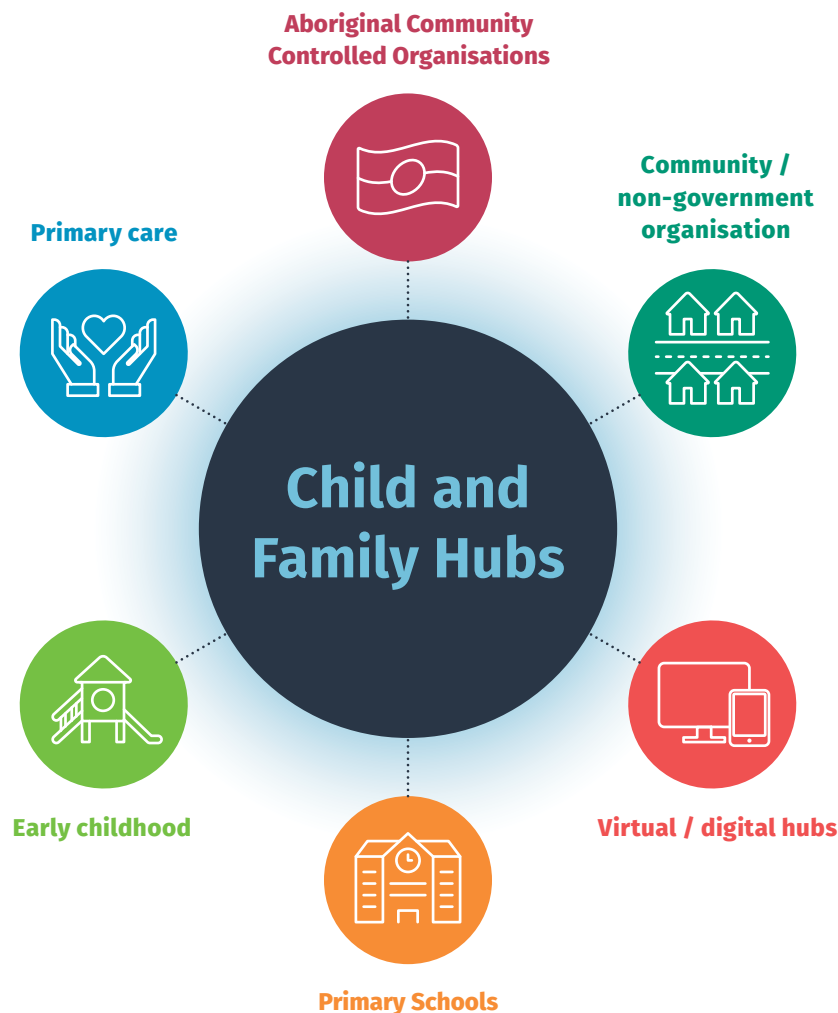


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Introduction

The National Child and Family Hubs Network (the Network) is a national, multidisciplinary group dedicated to strengthening Child and Family Hubs (Hubs)¹ across Australia. Hubs enable children and families to access the supports and services they need, have a safe place to meet other families and build essential social networks. The Network unites leaders, service providers, community-based organisations, advocates, researchers and policymakers to build the capacity of Hubs, helping to ensure fairer health, education and wellbeing for Australian children and their families. The Network's vision is that across Australia families are able to walk through a Child and Family Hub's welcoming front door and receive the right care and support for the child and family at the right time, leading to improved and equitable health and development outcomes.



¹ Child and Family Hubs provide a 'one stop shop' for families to support child development and improve child and family health and wellbeing. Hubs have two critical roles:

1. improving equitable access to a range of health, education, and social services using a family centred approach
2. providing opportunities to build parental capacity and for families to create social connections.

The Network:

- supports meaningful connections between Hubs across Australia and creates purposeful opportunities for shared learning and capacity building
- builds the evidence to enable a common and best practice approach to developing and evaluating Hubs
- advocates for sustainable funding models to ensure Hubs have the resources required to meet the diverse needs of children and families
- makes evidence, data and resources accessible to help drive quality improvement in Hubs.

The Network's planning day in February 2024 brought together over 50 critical friends including families that have experienced adversity, Hub implementers, and participants from research, government, philanthropy, health, education, justice and social sectors. The purpose of the planning day was to co-design and prioritise the future activities of the Network, reinforce a shared vision and collective action, and to support Hubs over the next 2-5 years. The Network appreciates the expertise and generosity of the Lived Experience Advisors whose contributions have shaped the Strategy.

Without the unifying and coordinating effort of the Network there is a risk that Hubs will emerge across the country through ad-hoc implementation and see a potential waste of resources and duplication of effort. By strengthening connections, the Network will help to mitigate this risk through the development of a shared practice framework, and by building the capability, research and evidence necessary for more equitable and sustained service delivery and outcomes.

‘Imagine turbocharging the quality and reach of Child and Family Hubs to affect the lives of more and more children and families in Australia, while igniting a ripple effect that sparks lasting policy change and program innovations. That’s the essence of the Network.’

Snapshot of the Network



25

members of the Network
Steering Committee



950

members subscribed to
the Network



460+

Child and Family Hubs
across Australia



Priority areas to build and scale Hubs over the next 2-5 years

Participants at the planning day agreed on six priority areas for the Network.

 Invest in the National Child and Family Hubs Network	 Secure long-term funding to support Hubs	 Build workforce capability and culture
 Use evidence to inform Hub implementation and evaluation	 Develop and implement an advocacy plan	 Partner with, learn from and support Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations

The group worked on four priority areas during the planning day, not including ‘securing long-term funding to support Hubs’ and ‘partner with, learn from and support Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations’ (ACCOs). It was agreed that the latter priority needed deeper consideration in collaboration with partners who were unable to attend on the day. Participants workshopped priority areas in small groups and provided detail for actions over a 2-5 year period. The ideas generated from the small and broader group discussions have informed the six Network priorities and associated actions outlined in this Strategy (Table 1). The Strategy incorporates the priority areas identified by participants who attended the planning day and critical friends who are members of the Network.

The Network welcomes the Australian Government’s Early Years Strategy 2024-2034 and its child and family-centred approach. The strategy has a clear focus on improving outcomes for children from birth to when they start school. Realising the priority areas and actions identified by the Network in this Strategy supports the vision articulated in the Australian Government’s Early Years Strategy *‘That all children in Australia thrive in their early years. They have the opportunity to reach their full potential when nurtured by empowered and connected families who are supported by strong communities.’*

Collaboration and co-design are critical for the Network to achieve the actions identified in the Strategy. The Network will collaborate with the many organisations working in Hub settings - and people attending Hubs - building on the strength of the Network membership and work already undertaken. A community-led and evidence-informed way of working will drive the Network’s approach across all priority areas and actions.

Table 1: National Child and Family Hubs Network Strategy 2024-2029

Focus Areas	Priority areas and actions over the next 2-5 years						
1. Strengthen shared vision and collective leadership	INVEST IN THE NATIONAL CHILD AND FAMILY HUBS NETWORK					Partner with, learn from and support Aboriginal Community Controlled organisations	Partner with SNAICC and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to identify actions to benefit First Nations communities
	Fund the Network to provide greater support to Hubs	Develop a governance structure to lead and coordinate streams of work across each Hub setting		Include child and family voice in the governance structure of the Network and at individual Hub levels			
2. Support structural reform to enable impact	SECURE LONG-TERM FUNDING TO SUPPORT HUBS						
	Research, define, prototype and cost the 'glue'		Use evidence to identify funding streams for the glue and advocate for funding				
3. Build sector capability	BUILD WORKFORCE CAPABILITY AND CULTURE						
	Understand current baseline for workforce capability and culture in Hubs	Develop a workforce and leadership capability framework for Hubs		Establish learning collaboratives for Hub practitioners and leaders			
4. Generate evidence on child and family Hub models	USE EVIDENCE TO INFORM HUB IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION						
	Develop and test the Hubs practice framework	Develop an evaluation framework for Hubs	Conduct a national survey of Hubs to determine current practice and capacity building needs		Establish a national research agenda		
5. Shift public perspectives and connect to broader ecosystem	DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT AN ADVOCACY PLAN						
	Develop an advocacy strategy to support Network and Hubs funding, systems level changes and quality scale of Hubs						

Actions for the next 2 years (e.g. Fund the Network to provide greater support to Hubs)

Actions for the next 3 - 5 years (e.g. Use evidence to identify funding streams...)

Partner with SNAICC and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to identify actions to benefit First Nations communities

1. Invest in the National Child and Family Hubs Network



Actions for the next 2-5 years:

- 1.1 Fund the Network to provide greater support to Hubs.
- 1.2 Develop a governance structure to lead and coordinate streams of work across each Hub setting.
- 1.3 Include child and family voice in the governance structure of the Network and at individual Hub levels.

1.1 Fund the Network to provide greater support to Hubs

There is a critical role for the Network to bring together families, Hub implementers and practitioners, state, territory and national organisations, government and philanthropy around a united vision on how to best build the capacity of Hubs to support children to thrive. The diversity of the Network's 950+ members is a key strength to build upon. The Network will guide the establishment of high-quality Hubs informed by research-based evidence with the goal of providing equitable services. Duplication of effort will be eliminated, knowledge and expertise will be willingly shared and valuable resources will be leveraged effectively. The Network Strategy requires funding to provide greater support to Hubs and deliver on identified strategic priorities over the coming 2-5 years



1.2 Develop a governance structure to lead and coordinate streams of work across each Hub setting

The Network will build upon its existing coordinating role and develop a governance structure that enables it to coordinate and lead work, and tailor supports across all Hub settings. Network staff with expertise in different Hub settings (early childhood, schools, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisations, primary care, community/NGOs and virtual settings) may be employed to lead working groups in each setting. For example, roles dedicated to focusing on coordinating and supporting work in the Schools as Community Platforms space, embedded within SNAICC for First Nations Hubs or working on early childhood Hubs could be established.

1.3 Include child and family voice in the governance structure of the Network and at individual Hub levels

The expertise of diverse children and families who have experienced adversities or life challenges must be embedded in the Network's efforts across all priority areas in the Strategy. Child and family voice should be embedded within the governance structure of the Network and within individual Hubs. The expertise of children and families, carers, and supporters provide invaluable insights that will inform the co-creation of better policies and practices within and beyond the Network. There is an opportunity to learn from First Nations communities and Connected Beginnings on deep listening and effectively harnessing families' experiences. One of the Network's Lived Experience Advisors highlighted *'the goal for families to tell their stories once in Hub settings and have information shared among practitioners involved in their care'*. An early piece of work could centre on *'telling our stories once'*.



2. Secure long-term funding to support Hubs

Actions for the next 2-5 years:

- 2.1 Research, define, prototype and cost the 'glue'.
- 2.2 Use evidence to identify funding streams for the glue and advocate for funding.

2.1 Research, define, prototype and cost the 'glue'

The 'glue' is a vital component of Hubs funding that supports the integration of services and supports to reduce fragmentation and address the needs of children and their families. It is the professional infrastructure Hubs need to succeed in delivering integrated and equitable services. Glue funding includes business oversight, staff supports, community engagement, local governance, shared accountability mechanisms, the collection and use of data for ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and improvements and shared information and technology systems. Without funding for this critical component, Hubs are more likely to experience undue administrative complexity, fragmentation rather than integration, and an unsustainable trajectory. Glue funding is essential for sustainability and requires flexibility to account for the maturity of a Hub and to meet the unique needs of each community.

In the next two years the Network should research, define, prototype and cost the glue. This work should capture what elements are essential, how it varies based on context (e.g. Hub setting) and demonstrate the value of long-term funding. Research should also consider the acquisition of core skills and knowledge pertinent to these professional roles.

2.2 Use evidence to identify funding streams for the glue and advocate for funding

The research and analysis of the professional infrastructure should enable the Network to identify how the glue can be best funded and inform advocacy for systemic investment. For example, there may be a role for philanthropy to fund trials through risk capital investment. If these trials are proven to have a significant impact, then funding responsibility on a broader scale could be assumed by state/territory and/or federal governments. Ideally the Network will build the evidence on the value of adequately investing in this critical infrastructure and identify agencies best placed to provide ongoing funding.



3. Build workforce capability and culture

Actions for the next 2-5 years:

- 3.1 Understand current baseline for workforce capability and culture in Hubs.
- 3.2 Develop a workforce and leadership capability framework for Hubs.
- 3.3 Establish learning collaboratives for Hub practitioners and leaders.

3.1 Understand current baseline for workforce capability and culture in Hubs

Currently the opportunities and challenges experienced by the 460+ Hubs across Australia are not well understood. Establishing a baseline understanding via a national Hubs workforce survey is a necessary first step for the development of a workforce leadership and capability framework. The survey will help the Network to better define and understand the diversity and needs of the sector. Ideally, the workforce survey would be replicated periodically (e.g. every two years) to monitor changes and inform adaptation.



3.2 Develop a workforce leadership and capability framework for Hubs

The workforce leadership and capability framework will be informed by the baseline survey of the Hubs workforce and co-designed with Hub practitioners. It will include:

- principles of working (enabling Hubs to function in a way that is meaningful in the local context and Hub setting)
- baseline skills and knowledge required for working in Hubs regardless of professional knowledge (e.g. trauma informed practice, relational practice, parent sensitivity)
- support for a lived experience workforce including peer supervision and qualifications
- recognition that Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations have significant experience valuing different expertise with respect
- consideration of the diversity within communities and supporting the workforce to provide services and supports that reflect these diversities.

The Emerging Minds workforce development framework,² Tasmanian Learning and Development Framework³ and Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership Professional Development Framework could also inform the development of the workforce leadership and capability framework.

3.3 Establish learning collaboratives for Hub practitioners and leaders

Learning collaboratives, or communities of practice, will bring together Hub practitioners/leaders to connect and develop a supportive network to embed learning systems within organisations and support leadership skills. Learning collaboratives will focus on quality improvement and accountable leadership, supporting Hub practitioners to design and test changes in Hubs, and report and measure change outcomes through regular data collection and presentation (improvement science). Learning collaboratives will seek to build organisational capacity and drive Hub innovation across the country.



2 [Keeping child mental health in mind: A workforce development framework for supporting infants, children and parents](#)

3 [Child and Family Learning Centre Quality Improvement Tool](#)

4. Use evidence to inform Hub implementation and evaluation



Actions for the next 2-5 years:

- 4.1** Develop and test the Hubs practice framework.
- 4.2** Develop an evaluation framework for Hubs.
- 4.3** Conduct a national survey of Hubs to determine current practice and capacity building needs.
- 4.4** Establish a national research agenda.
- 4.5** Establish a clearinghouse to support information sharing.

4.1 Develop and test the Hubs practice framework

The Network will build on the considerable work that has been undertaken to develop a Hubs Practice Framework. In 2023-24, with significant consultation, the Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership (TQKP) developed a Framework to guide best practice in Child and Family Hubs in Queensland and beyond. Based on this initial work, the Network will develop practical resources to guide Hub planning, implementation and evaluation. The Hubs practice framework resources will be tested and refined with people attending and working in Hubs with the aim of ensuring their relevance for different Hub settings as well as rural, regional and remote contexts.

4.2 Develop an evaluation framework for Hubs

The absence of a national evaluation framework for Hubs to measure the impact for children and families is a research gap. The evaluation framework for Hubs will ideally comprise a national framework and a local evaluation framework. The National evaluation framework will include:

- national process and outcome indicators
- practice guidance on developing data sharing arrangements between Hub services
- identified knowledge and evaluation gaps that provide opportunities for deep dive evaluations to inform work e.g. Hubs that focus on specific communities including rural and remote, multicultural or First Nations communities.

A local Hubs evaluation framework will support new and existing Hubs with guidance on lead indicators to monitor and improve accessibility, quality and participation. The local evaluation framework will provide a consistent set of indicators that are not onerous for individual Hubs to collect, analyse and interpret. Critical to the success of the local Hubs evaluation framework will be upskilling Hubs staff to use data and evidence to inform and improve practice.

4.3 Conduct a national survey of Hubs to determine current practice and capacity building needs

The Network will lead a national survey of Hubs across Australia to determine a baseline around current practice and identify capacity building needs. The national survey will be broader than the Hubs workforce survey (outlined in priority 3) and will help prioritise actions for the national research agenda. Areas to be included in the survey are community context, Hub funding sources, implementation of core components of a Hub (as identified in the practice framework), services and supports provided, level of integration, maturity and future priorities. The information obtained from the survey will provide a snapshot of the spectrum of service integration within Hubs across Australia and inform further capacity building activities, research and evaluation.

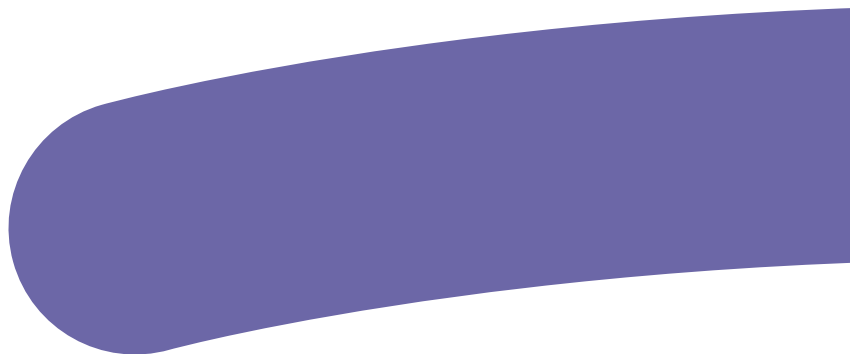
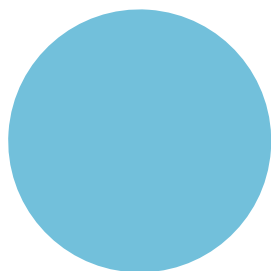
4.4 Establish a national research agenda

The national research agenda will build evidence to inform future directions in funding, policy and advocacy. Australian research on Hubs is not nationally coordinated and there are knowledge gaps the Network could have a role in addressing. The Network will partner with communities, families and children in the design and implementation of the national research agenda. Further research into the different types of Hubs, core components required and funding models which enable services to collaborate in Hubs (e.g. less prescriptive funding for services; outcomes focus over activity focus) may form part of the initial research agenda.

4.5 Establish a clearinghouse to support information sharing

The Network will establish a research clearinghouse as a central location to share evidence and resources on the Network website. In the longer term the Network aspires to have:

- the ability to capture aggregate data on Hubs
- a learning platform which supports sharing innovative practice, evidence and insights.





5. Develop and implement an advocacy plan

Actions for the next 2-5 years:

5.1 Develop an advocacy strategy to support:

- Network and Hubs funding
- systems level changes
- quality scale of Hubs.

5.1 Develop an advocacy strategy to support Network and Hubs funding, systems level changes and quality scale of Hubs

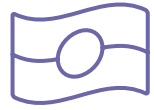
The current policy environment provides a critical opportunity to collaborate and advocate for support for the Network and investment in Hubs. The national policy context includes:

- The Early Years Strategy 2024-2034
- The National Agreement on Closing the Gap
- The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy
- The National School Reform Agreement
- The Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Early Childhood Education and Care
- National Disability Insurance Scheme reform
- The Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children (IDAC)
- Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee 2024 Report
- National Action Plan for the Health of Children and Young People 2020-2030
- National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

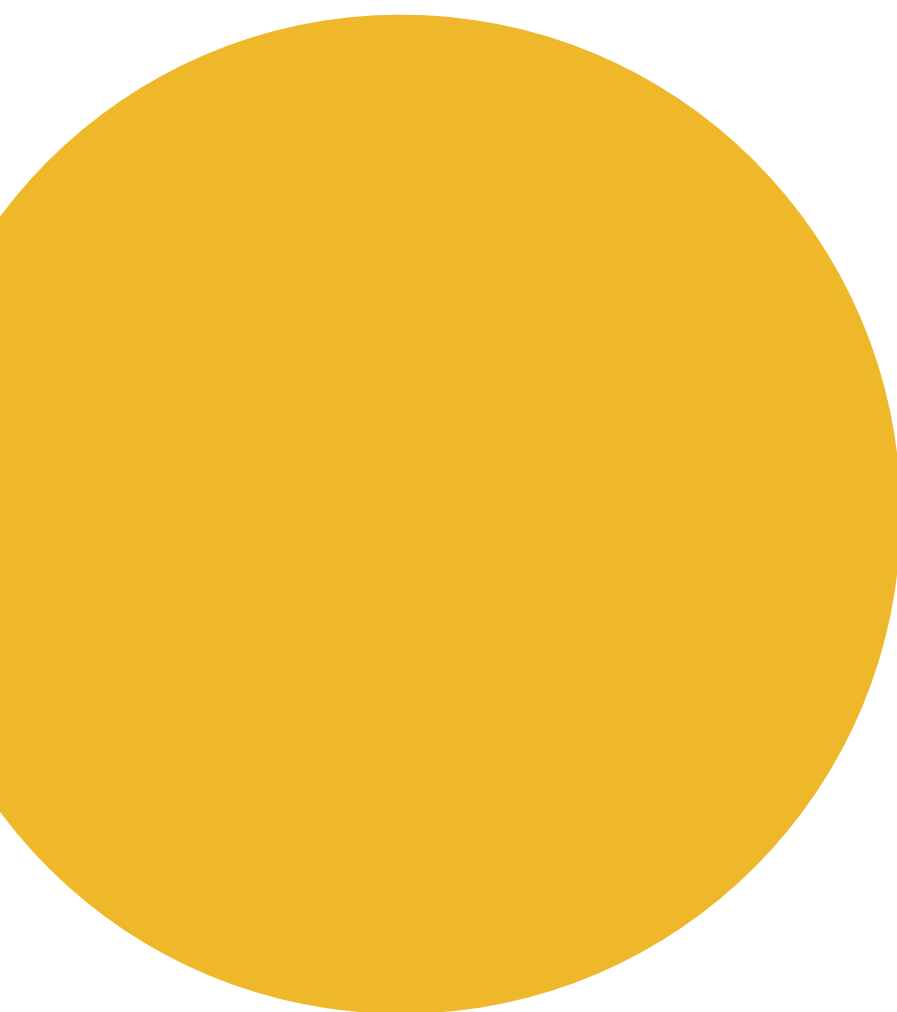
The states and territories are also leading significant child and family-focused policy and reforms work.

The Network will continue to build partnerships and work collaboratively to develop a unified and coordinated advocacy agenda. This approach will require agreement on the core elements to strengthen and scale Hubs - such as funding for the professional infrastructure Hubs need to succeed in delivering integrated and equitable services (the glue). It will be important for the Network to map existing advocacy efforts and establish common messages and frames including a high-level Hubs narrative. The united and coordinated advocacy agenda will seek to make decision making easier for philanthropic organisations and government funding bodies.

6. Partner with, learn from and support Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations



The Network recognises the importance of partnering with and learning from First Nations organisations and communities to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families thrive. The Network has an established relationship with SNAICC as a critical member on the Network Steering Committee and will work to build broader relationships. Consultation with SNAICC, the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations will help identify priority actions for the next 2 -5 years.



Map of Network members' existing work

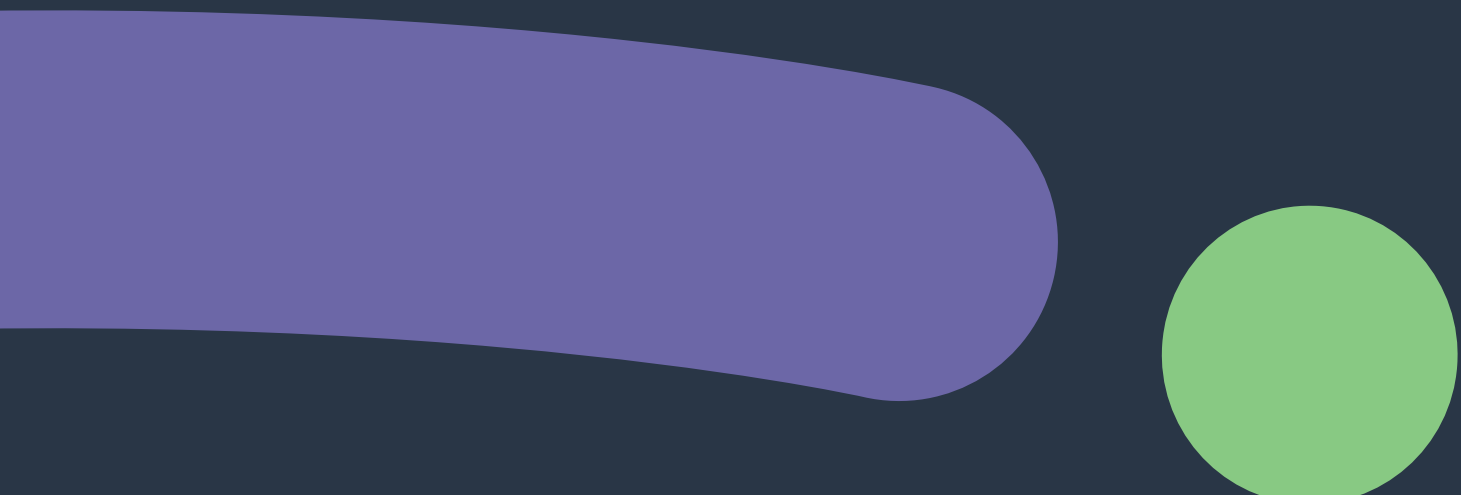
The Network recognises there is a significant amount and breadth of work already being undertaken by Network member organisations. This strategy aims to build upon existing work, rather than duplicating what is already being undertaken. Table 2 maps work already being undertaken in the sector.

Table 2: Map of Network members' existing work

Focus Areas	Organisations	Activities
1. Strengthen shared vision and collective leadership	Centre for Community Child Health/MCRI, SLHD/UniSyd, Children's Health QLD, Thriving QLD Kids Partnership, Our Place, ARACY, Philanthropy, Benevolent Society, Community Hubs Australia, University of Melbourne, The Possibility Partnership, Mission Australia.	- National Child and Family Hubs Network - Collaborative work on Hub research and implementation and resource development (Hub Practice Framework, Common Approach, importance of navigators) - Leading state implementation of integrated care and Hubs - Developing new Hub models (H2H Kids, Virtual, Our Place, for specific populations, Health Justice Partnerships, One Door, Community Hubs Australia, Building Connections, Schools as Community Platforms) - Involvement in the Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children (IDAC)
2. Support structural reform to enable impact	Centre for Community Child Health/MCRI, SLHD/UniSyd, Children's Health QLD, Thriving QLD Kids Partnership, Beyond Blue, SVA, Karitane, SNAICC, Australian Gov Dept Health and Aged Care, Our Place, ARACY, Philanthropy, SA Govt ECD, Brave Foundation and SEED, Benevolent Society, Community Hubs Australia, University of Melbourne, The Possibility Partnership, Mission Australia, Health Justice Australia, Logan Together, Restacking the Odds, Australian Gov Dept SS.	- Funding and costing research and evidence related to developing and implementing Hubs - Advocate for government policy support relating to: integrated Hubs as an evidence-based model of care; new Hubs in areas of need; funding for the Network; ACCOs as key organisations to support Hubs for Indigenous families; funding for glue; funding for navigators; policies and practices that address the structural causes of disadvantage - Developing practice frameworks/benchmarking to guide quality practice - Funding innovation, development and evaluation - Policy development and implementation - Place community voice at the heart of Hubs work

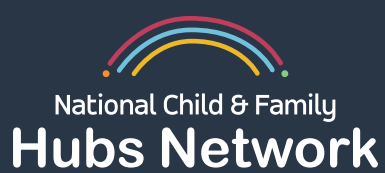
Focus Areas	Organisations	Activities
3. Build sector capability	Centre for Community Child Health/MCRI, Children's Health QLD, Thriving QLD Kids Partnership, SVA, Karitane, SNAICC, ARACY, Philanthropy, South Aust Govt ECD, Benevolent Society, Community Hubs Australia, Restacking the Odds, University of Melbourne, Mission Australia, Health Justice Australia, Logan Together, SA Govt ECD, Emerging Minds.	• Learning Collaboratives to support leadership development and continuous learning and improvement in Hubs staff • Webinars and Community of Practice for Hubs • Training and support for relational practice and The Common Approach • Using and promoting ECHO a highly effective, scalable education model, used globally to reduce disparities in care • Embedding Researchers in Residence to support learning health systems and organisational change • Support and guidance for incorporating the voice of children into Hubs
4. Generate evidence on child and family hub models	Centre for Community Child Health/MCRI, SLHD/UniSyd, UNSW, University of Tasmania, Telethon Kids, Children's Health QLD, Thriving QLD Kids Partnership, Beyond Blue, SVA, Karitane, ARACY, Philanthropy, SA Govt ECD, Benevolent Society, Community Hubs Australia, Logan Together, Restacking the Odds, University of Melbourne, Mission Australia, Health Justice Australia, Aust Govt Dept SS, Emerging Minds, Our Place.	• Research and evidence generation on Hubs in primary and community care, virtual Hubs, Hubs for priority populations, non-government orgs., primary schools, early years, place-based initiatives • Research into funding models to support integrated care for children • Cost effectiveness/return on investment evaluations of Hubs • Distribution and Costing of Hubs in Integrated Child and Family Centres
5. Shift public perspectives and connect to broader ecosystem	Centre for Community Child Health/MCRI, Telethon Kids, Thriving QLD Kids Partnership, Beyond Blue, SVA, National Children's Commissioner, Karitane, SNAICC, Our Place, ARACY, Philanthropy, Community Hubs Australia, Logan Together, First Steps Count, Good Samaritan Catholic Primary School, Lived Experience Advisors.	• Media communications • Information for families and children • Embedding voice of community and families in work • Early Years Catalyst deep dive into mental models report

Key	
ACCOS	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations
ARACY	Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth
Aust Gov Dept Health and Aged Care	Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care
Aust Gov Dept SS	Australian Government Department of Social Services
ECHO	Queensland Government’s Project Echo
First Steps Count	First Steps Count Child and Community Centre
H2H Kids	Head to Health Kids Hubs
IDAC	Investment Dialogue for Australia’s Children
MCRI	Murdoch Children’s Research Institute
SA Govt ECD	South Australian Government Office for Early Childhood Development
SEED	Social Economic Empowerment Division (a Department of the Brave Foundation)
SLHD	Sydney Local Health District
SNAICC	SNAICC is a national non-government peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, and the Sectors that support them
SVA	Social Ventures Australia
UniSyd	University of Sydney
UNSW	University of New South Wales



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