

**every child**  
**every chance**

**a good childhood is in everyone's  
best interests**

**Victoria's Children's Reforms:  
Achieving the vision for improved  
outcomes for children**

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WACOSS Social Policy Seminar – 25 August 2010



# VCOSS

- ◆ **VCOSS pursues just and fair social outcomes and advocates for the development of a sustainable, fair and equitable society.**
- ◆ **Achieve this through:**
  - **Policy advocacy to support equity, social justice, fair access to resources and participation for all**
  - **Building a strong sector that can lead social change**
  - **Creating a strong public presence for the changes required**
  - **Sustaining just, equitable and efficient outcomes through collaboration**



# **VCOSS – working to achieve improved outcomes for children**

*Any nation that does not care for and protect all of its children does not deserve to be called a nation.*  
**Nelson Mandela**

- ◆ **Happy, healthy children - best care and support**
- ◆ **Integrated, flexible support services along service continuum tailored to children's & families' needs critical**



# Victoria's vision: Improved outcomes for children

- ◆ Unifying factor across all sectors
- ◆ Breadth & depth of support
- ◆ Rationale for support varied but complementary:
  - Economic – the ‘social dividend’
  - Social – happier, healthier children
  - Community – stronger, productive

# The drive for improved outcomes for children

- ◆ **Prof James Heckman (2006):**

investment in younger children promotes

‘productivity in the economy and in society at large.....and that early interventions.....have much higher returns than later interventions such as reduced pupil-teacher ratios, public job training, [prisoner] rehabilitation programs, tuition subsidies, or expenditure on police.’

# Changing to achieve improved outcomes for children

**‘the current model of public policy making, based on the reduction of complex problems into separate, rationally manageable components, is no longer appropriate to the challenges faced by governments and changes to the wider environment in which they operate.’**

**Jake Chapman  
DEMOS, UK**

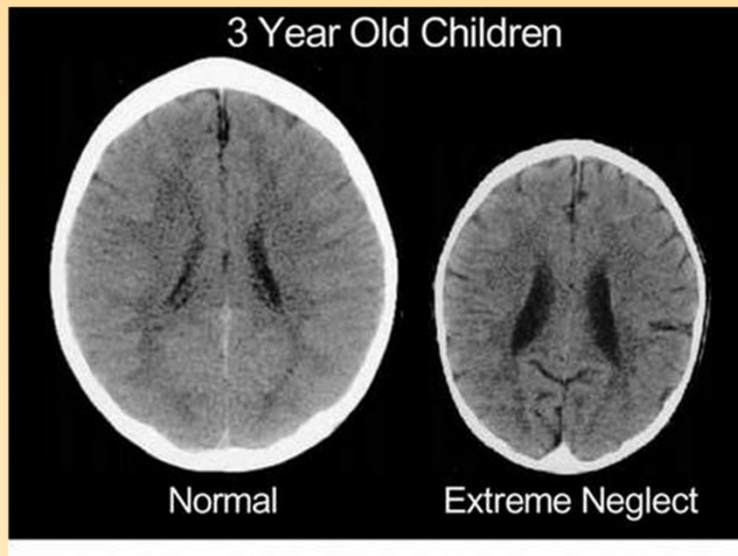


# Achieving the vision of improved outcomes for children

- ◆ Privileging evidence
- ◆ A common language – Best interests
- ◆ Extensive consultation and collaborative approaches
- ◆ Strong leadership and improved linkages and partnerships across sectors
- ◆ Establish and support better & new organisational capabilities

# Privileging evidence

- ◆ Key academics in Victoria & Australia
- ◆ Science of children's development
- ◆ International research: Dr Bruce Perry and Dr Jack Shonkoff



Source: Based on the research of  
The ChildTrauma Academy led  
by Dr Bruce Perry,  
Image available at:  
<http://www.earlyhomelearning.org.uk/brainDevelopment>.



# A common language: Best interests

- ◆ Best interests of children – improved outcomes
- ◆ Frame for legislation:
  - Child Wellbeing & Safety Act
  - Child, Youth & Families Act
- ◆ Best interests Framework, case practice model, supporting docs, training
- ◆ Victorian Child & Adolescent Outcomes Framework

# Victorian Child and Adolescent Outcomes Framework

- Uses the ecological framework that recognises that the child is influenced by the family, community and society
- Providing evidence on the health, safety, development, learning and wellbeing of children and young people

## Children and young people

- optimal antenatal/infant development
- optimal physical health
  - adequate nutrition
  - free from preventable disease
  - healthy teeth and gums
  - healthy weight
  - adequate exercise and physical activity
  - healthy teenage lifestyle
  - safe from injury and harm
- optimal social and emotional development
  - positive child behaviour and mental health
  - pro-social teenage lifestyle and law abiding behaviour
  - teenagers able to rely on supportive adults
- optimal language and cognitive development
  - successful in literacy and numeracy
  - young people complete secondary education

## Families

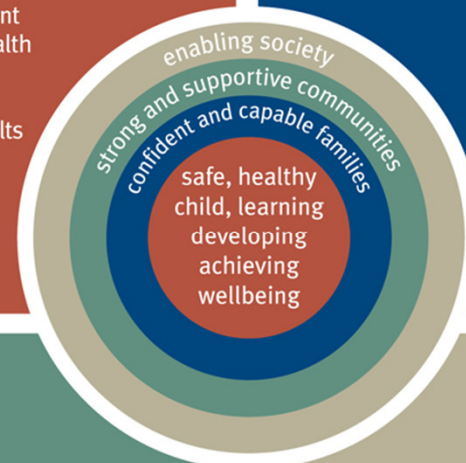
- healthy adult lifestyle
- parent promotion of child health and development
- good parental mental health
- free from abuse and neglect
- free from child exposure to conflict or violence
- ability to pay for essentials
- adequate family housing
- positive family functioning

## Community

- safe from environmental toxins
- communities that enable parents, children and young people to build connections and draw on informal assistance
- accessible local recreation spaces, activities and community facilities
- low levels of crime in community

## Society

- quality antenatal care
- early identification of child health needs
- high quality early education and care experiences available
- adequate supports to meet needs of families with children with disability
- children attend and enjoy school
- adult health and community services that meet the needs of parents critical to parenting
- adequate supports for vulnerable teenagers



# Extensive consultation & collaborative approaches

- ◆ Critical to establish authorising environment and build ownership of reform approaches across sectors
- ◆ Foundation and development of partnerships across sectors
- ◆ Develops better policy & program outcomes

# **Strong leadership & improved linkages and partnerships across sectors**

- ◆ **Strong leadership within Government, community sector and academics**
- ◆ **Improved integration or linkages across continuum of services for children key to improving outcomes**
- ◆ **High quality, integrated early childhood education and care services are critical to increasing the proportion of children entering school with the basic skills for life and learning.**

# Better and new organisational capabilities

- ◆ Capabilities across culture, resources, skills
- ◆ New investments: infrastructure, expanded service models, earlier intervention

# Victoria's journey: Achieving the vision of improved outcomes for children

- ◆ **Key foundation: Growing Victoria Together – September 2002**
- ◆ **Evidence – establishment first Early Years manager role**
- ◆ **Best Start developed**

# Victoria's journey – *continuing*

- ◆ **2002 State Election – key commitments:**
  - **Premier's Children's Advisory Committee**
  - **Children's Centres**
  - **Increased investment in kinder, expanded M&CH**
  - **Municipal Early Years Plans**
  - **+ others**



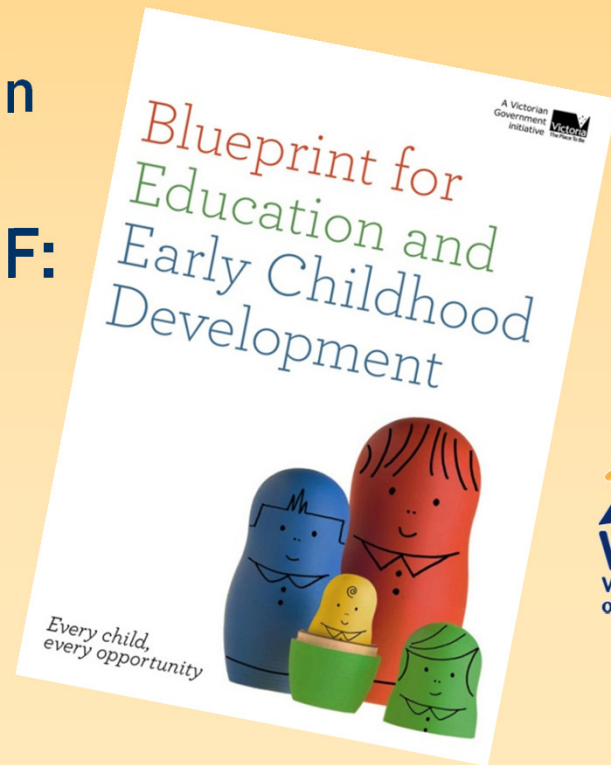
# Victoria's journey – continuing

- ◆ A Fairer Victoria – 2005
- ◆ Establishment of the Office for Children
  - Included the establishment of the Statewide Outcomes branch
- ◆ Prioritising of evidence
- ◆ Complementary reforms for vulnerable children
- ◆ COAG National Reform Agenda



# Victoria's journey – continuing

- ◆ New Premier August 2007
- ◆ Establishment of DEECD
- ◆ Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development
  - Vision: Every young Victorian thrives, learns and grows...'
- ◆ Developments from VCAOF: Outcomes Reports
  - State of Victoria's Children, Young People, Aboriginal Children & Young People



# Victoria's journey – *continuing* Pressures and challenges

- ◆ Speed of change vs capacity for change
- ◆ Professional boundaries – need for culture change
- ◆ Linkages across service continuum variable

# A central policy framework to drive & enable reform

- ◆ Articulates broad direction and enables local flexibility and adaptability.
- ◆ Needs to:
  - clearly establish the direction of change with defined broad outcome goals;
  - establish targets and specify core evaluation requirements based around these broad outcome goals;
  - explicitly allow for innovation and experimentation with cause & effect;
  - set boundaries that cannot be crossed by any implementation strategy;
  - allocate resources– resource use to be determined at the local level; &
  - incorporate mechanisms to assist in upscaling of learnings from innovative practice.

# Victoria's journey – key factors

- Privileging evidence
- A common language – Best interests
- Extensive consultation and collaborative approaches
- Strong leadership and improved linkages and partnerships across sectors
- Establish and support better & new organisational capabilities

## PLUS

- Resilience, patience and persistence
- Recognising transformational change  
– to culture, systems and practice takes time
- **The 'X' factor**
  - energy, momentum, leadership, keeping on, getting back on track



# Thank you

## Resources & Contact details

- ◆ DEECD – Outcomes Framework:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/directions/children/vcams/default.htm>

DHS website re Best Interests:

<http://www.cyf.vic.gov.au/every-child-every-chance/home> - select 'Publications'

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