Government’s Social Policy Objectives

- Equality of opportunity, a proper safety net & a compassionate response to entrenched social and economic disadvantage.
- Providing support for new parents, low income earners, pensioners, seniors, carers, people with a disability & veterans.
- Addressing housing affordability, homelessness & Indigenous disadvantage.
- Reducing violence against women & children & promoting social inclusion.

**FaHCSIA Key Objectives**

- Close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians
- Build a modern social and income support system
- Provide better support and services for those in need
- **Deliver family policy that best fosters the development, wellbeing and safety of children**
- Reduce homelessness and make housing more affordable
- Promote women’s safety, economic security and participation

Source: *FaHCSIA 2008-10 Strategic Framework*
Social Inclusion Priorities

- Focus on particular neighbourhoods and communities
- Addressing the incidence of homelessness
- Employment for people with disability or mental illness
- Closing the gap for Indigenous Australians
- **Jobless families with children**
- Children at greatest risk of long term disadvantage
Children at risk

• In 2007-08 in Australia, there were 55,120 substantiated cases of child abuse & neglect out of 317,256 reports.
• In the vast majority of cases reported, a child protection response was not required.
• Early intervention for the whole family means that vulnerable families are supported before children are at risk.
Government’s Family Policy Directions

- Child-centred, family focussed
- Investment in the early years
- Priority to identify children & families at risk
- Protect/support the most vulnerable children & families
- Emphasis on early intervention & prevention
- Build capacity & resilience in children and families
- Nurture & care for abused/neglected children
- Effective, coordinated & inclusive cross-sector approach
Major New Initiatives to Support Families and Children

• COAG National Early Childhood Development Strategy
• National Paid Parental Leave Scheme
• National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-2020
• *Time for Action*: The National Council’s Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, 2009-2021
• Family Support Program
On 16 February 2009, Minister Macklin announced the new Family Support Program.

The FSP brings together a number of existing family, children and parenting services that share a common interest in supporting Australian families, parents and children.
The Family Support Program (FSP)

- Family Relationship Services Program (FRSP), Communities for Children (CfC) and the National Illicit Drugs Strategy (NIDS) are all programs included under the FSP.

- The FSP allows for better access and ability to move between service streams

- Builds stronger relationships between FSP service providers and Government
Drug and Alcohol abuse - A Presenting Need in the FSP

• Drug and Alcohol abuse is a presenting issue across the Family Support Program and is evident amongst clients of the FRSP.

• Of the 209,793 registered FRSP clients in the 08/09 year, 9,275 of these clients identified Drug/Alcohol/Substance abuse as a presenting need.
FRSP Presenting Needs

- Drug/Alcohol/Substance Abuse
- Child Protection issues
- Mental Health issues
- Homelessness
FaHCSIA and Therapeutic Communities

- There is scope to make linkages between FaHCSIA and Therapeutic Communities (TC) even stronger.

- There are three existing service gateways in which a client may be referred to a TC:
  - 1. Drug and alcohol services under NIDS
  - 2. Family services under the FSP
  - 3. Community services such as Local Answers
Drummond Street Relationship Centre

- FSP services provide support for families seeking help for drug/alcohol/substance abuse.

- For instance, Drummond Street Relationship Centre is a FRSP service provider that delivers child and family relationship services.

- Counsellors facilitate the process for individuals, couples and families dealing with difficulties in relationships, including relationships affected by Drug and Alcohol abuse.
One organisation that provides rehabilitation programs for men and women with drug and alcohol problems is Odyssey House.

Some services available at Odyssey House are:

- Counselling services, Withdrawal Unit, Parent’s and children’s program, Residential Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation program, After care program
Linkages across FaHCSIA

- One of the key issues for the new FSP is to create and maintain linkages with other relevant areas of FaHCSIA to ensure we’re delivering integrated services.

- Key relevant areas include homelessness, child protection and young carers.
Linkages across FaHCSIA – Causes of Homelessness

• Homelessness is not just the result of too few houses – mental illness, family breakdown and drug and alcohol abuse all contribute to the level of homelessness in Australia.

• Family or relationship breakdown is the second most common reason people seek assistance from homelessness services.

• Ten per cent of SAAP clients cite relationship or family breakdown as the primary reason for seeking assistance.
Linkages across FaHCSIA – Causes of Homelessness

• In 2004–05, 12 per cent of SAAP clients reported a mental health problem, 19 per cent reported a substance use problem and another 5 per cent reported both a mental health and a substance use problem.

• Vulnerability to homelessness is also heightened during important life transitions such as going from school to work, leaving the child protection system, family breakdown, leaving prison, relocating or retirement.
Linkages across FaHCSIA – Child Protection

- The National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children identifies the risk factors of child abuse and neglect in families involved with child protection services as:

  - Domestic Violence
  - Parental alcohol and drug abuse
  - Parental mental health problems
Linkages across FaHCSIA - Young carers

- Young carers are children and young people up to 25 years of age who help care in families where someone has an illness, a disability, a mental illness or who has an alcohol or other drug problem.

- At least one in ten children in Australia has some level of responsibility as a carer in their home.
Linkages with other departments

Another key Family Support Program policy direction for FaHCSIA is to create linkages with other departments, such as DEEWR and DoHA.

DEEWR have a range of programs and responsibilities that are relevant to the FSP.

For instance, DEEWR has created new arrangements provided by Job Services Australia to assist parents/carers who have responsibilities and needs that may affect their ability to secure employment.
DEEWR - Job Services Australia

• Clients work through an Employment Pathway Plan (EPP) which will place them into streams based on their needs.

• Stream 4 particularly, will provide integrated, intensive assistance to the most disadvantaged job seekers in our community.

• Including but not limited to those with mental illness, addictions - including gambling, drug or alcohol, domestic violence and family and relationship issues and homelessness or unstable accommodation.
Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA)

- Linkages can also be made between DoHA and FaHCSIA.

- DoHA provides funding for a range of drug/alcohol and mental health programs, including programs that target families, children and young people.

- Mensheds