



Evaluation of the First Action Plans for the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030

National Office for Child Safety, Attorney-General's
Department

Final Evaluation Report

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Acknowledgment of Country

Deloitte, together with the National Office for Child Safety, acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who contributed to the development of the Evaluation of the First Action Plans for the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse.

Acknowledgement to victims and survivors

Deloitte, together with the National Office for Child Safety, acknowledges the contributions and wisdom of victims and survivors and their supporters to the Evaluation of the First Action Plans for the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse.

Glossary

Acronym	Full name
1AP	First National and Commonwealth Action Plans
2AP	Second Action Plan
3AP	Third Action Plan
ABF	Australian Border Force
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACACS	Australian Child Abuse Categorisation Schema
ACIC	Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission
ACMS	Australian Child Maltreatment Study
AFP	Australian Federal Police
AGD	Attorney-General's Department
AIC	Australian Institute of Criminology
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ANAO	Australian National Audit Office
ASOS	Australian Sexual Offence Statistical
AUD	Australian Dollar
BIRD	Believe Inquire Respond to Disclosures Indigenous Reference Group
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CAP	First Commonwealth Action Plan
CCSF	Commonwealth Child Safe Framework
CRRE	Consent and Respectful Relationships Education
CSSLG	Child Safe Sectors Leadership Group
CWDA	Australian Child Wellbeing Data Asset
CYDA	Children and Young People with Disability Australia
DHA	Department of Home Affairs
DHDA	Department of Health, Disability and Ageing
DSS	Department of Social Services
eSafety	eSafety Commissioner
FCB Project	Families Capacity Building Project

FFAS	Federal Funding Agreement Schedule
ICSE	International Child Sexual Exploitation database
IEG	Interdepartmental Executive Group
IPCPP	Indo-Pacific Child Protection Program
ISWG	Information Sharing Working Group
Joint Council	Australia-US Joint Council on Combating Online Child Sexual Exploitation
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Gender Diverse, Intersex, Queer, Asexual, and other diverse identities.
M&E Framework¹	The National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse (2021-30)'s Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
MPS	Minimum Practice Standards
NAP	First National Action Plan
National Centre	National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse
NACCHO	National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
National Framework	National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020
National Office	National Office for Child Safety
National Strategy	National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030
NGCG	Non-Government Consultative Groups
NCRG	National Clinical Reference Group
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NIAA	National Indigenous Australians Agency
NSAG	National Strategy Advisory Group
NSPWG	National Strategy Policy Working Group
NVIF	National Victim Identification Framework
OLWGs	Officer Level Working Groups
Plan	National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032
Proud Spirit	Gayaa Dhuwi
Royal Commission	Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
Safe and Supported	Safe and Supported: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031
SGG	Senior Governance Group
SMG	Strategic Management Group

¹ This may also be known as Implementation, Measurement, Evaluation and Reporting (I&M&E&R).

SNAICC	Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care
SOG	Senior Oversight Group
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound.
The Youth Summit	The National Child Safety Youth Summit
TIA	Towards Independent Adulthood program
TILA	Transition to Independent Living Allowance
VLCO	Victim Liaison Coordination Officer
YLA	Youth Law Australia

Definitions

Term	Definition
Child abuse material	Material that depicts or describes a child, or a representation of a child, who is or appears to be under the age of 18, and who is or appears to be in a sexual pose or sexual activity, or that shows or describes the person's sexual organs or breasts as a dominant characteristic.
Child maltreatment	Physical, emotional or sexual abuse, exposure to domestic and family violence, or neglect.
Children and young people	People under the age of 18.
Children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours	Children and young people who have displayed sexual behaviours that fall outside what may be considered developmentally expected or socially appropriate, cause harm to themselves or others, and occur either face to face and/or via technology. When these behaviours involve others, they may include a lack of consent, reciprocity, mutuality, and may involve the use of coercion, force, or a misuse of power. Harmful sexual behaviours invoke worry about the development and wellbeing of the child, young person, or others involved, and where they involve other children or young people, the behaviours may cause significant harm and may be experienced as abusive by other children and young people involved. Harmful sexual behaviours can occur in any setting, including in person and online.
Child sexual abuse	Any act that exposes a child or young person to or involves a child or young person in, sexual activities that: • they do not understand, • they do not or cannot consent to, • are not accepted by the community, • are unlawful.²
Contact child sexual abuse	When a person physically sexually abuses a child or young person. There are criminal offences for different types of contact child sexual abuse. These are sometimes called 'contact offences'.
Grooming	Behaviours that manipulate and control a child, their family, kin and carers or other support networks, or organisations. The intent of manipulation is to: • gain access to the child, • obtain the child's compliance, • maintain the child's silence, • avoid discovery of sexual abuse.
Procurement offences	Procurement offences usually involve a person arranging to engage in sexual activity with a child. The person can encourage, entice or recruit the child to engage in sexual activity. They can also persuade the child – including through threats or promises – to engage in that activity. Procuring may be done by grooming the child or someone with access to the child.
Victims and survivors	Those who have experienced child sexual abuse. We recognise that not all people with lived experience of child sexual abuse will identify with these terms.
Priority groups	The National Strategy's priority groups include: • victims and survivors of child sexual abuse and their advocates, • children and young people and their support networks, • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, • culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, • people with disability, • LGBTQIA+ people, • people living in regional and remote communities.

² Commonwealth of Australia, National Office for Child Safety, National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030 (2021).

Executive summary.

Deloitte was engaged by National Office for Child Safety within the Australian Attorney-General's Department to undertake an independent implementation (process) evaluation of the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse's First National Action Plan and First Commonwealth Action Plan (collectively known as First Action Plans, or 1AP).

Introduction

The National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse (the National Strategy) was launched in October 2021 in response to the widespread extent and impact of child sexual abuse revealed by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (the Royal Commission). The Australian Government developed the National Strategy in partnership with state and territory governments. The National Strategy:

- serves as a nationally coordinated strategic framework for preventing and responding to child sexual abuse which considers child sexual abuse in all settings, including online, within families and organisations
- aims to reduce the risk, extent and impact of child sexual abuse and related harms in Australia
- responds to approximately 100 Royal Commission recommendations.³

The National Strategy is being implemented through action plans. The first two plans are being implemented over five years from 2021-2025 – [First National Action Plan \(NAP\)](#) and [First Commonwealth Action Plan \(CAP\)](#).⁴ The NAP contains 29 activities⁵ to be implemented by designated Activity Leads (Australian Government lead agencies) in partnership with state and territory governments and sector stakeholders where appropriate. The CAP contains 33 activities for which the Australian Government assumes primary responsibility in preventing and responding to child sexual abuse. Each activity under 1AP was assigned to one of five key themes – (1) awareness raising, education and building child safe cultures, (2) supporting and empowering victims and survivors, (3) enhancing national approaches to children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours, (4) offending prevention and intervention, and (5) improving the evidence base. The Australian Government provided \$307.5 million over five years (2021-25) to support the implementation of the National Strategy.⁶ The Australian Government invested additional funding of \$21.2 million to continue implementation of several 1AP activities over 2025-26.

Evaluation purpose and approach

The National Office for Child Safety (the National Office), within the Attorney-General's Department, engaged Deloitte to undertake an independent implementation (process) evaluation of the National Strategy's 1AP. The evaluation's focus is on the period between 2021 and 2024 (see footnote 4) and aims to assess the extent to which the 1AP:

- has been effective (i.e., has made adequate progress against its intended outcomes) and efficient
- is aligned with the National Strategy values
- is aligned with and supported progress towards the National Strategy's outcomes and objectives

³ National Office for Child Safety, 2021, National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030, <<https://www.childsafety.gov.au/resources/national-strategy-prevent-and-respond-child-sexual-abuse-2021-2030>>, accessed 1 July 2025.

⁴ The original implementation timeframes for the National Action Plan and Commonwealth Action Plan were 2021-24. In 2025, the Australian Government invested additional funding extending key activities under the National Strategy First Action Plans over 2025-26.

⁵ Following the release of the National Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation Framework in June 2024, the 62 measures in the National and Commonwealth Action Plans are referred to as 'activities' to avoid confusion with the use of the term 'measures', which in the context of evaluation refers to measuring whether a short-, medium- or long-term outcome has been achieved.

⁶ Commonwealth of Australia. (2021, May 11). *Budget Paper No. 2: Budget Measures 2021-22* [PDF]. Treasury. Creative Commons BY 3.0 Australia. Retrieved September 2, 2025, from <https://archive.budget.gov.au/2021-22/bp2/download/bp2_2021-22.pdf>

- has embedded evaluation and continuous improvement mechanisms within the design, development and implementation of activities.

The evaluation included the following key data collection activities:

- **Desktop review** of publicly available documents identified by the National Office and activity-specific documentation for selected 1AP activities, such as evaluations, developed resources and progress reports.
- 4 **online surveys** were distributed via the National Office to National Strategy senior governance groups, non-government consultative groups (including National Strategy advisory groups, and other relevant non-government stakeholders), Activity Leads and National Strategy officer level working group members. The surveys received a total of 49 responses which collectively represent a response rate of 16% (n=309).
- 16 **opt-in semi-structured interviews** were completed with senior governance group members (n=2), non-government consultative groups (n=11), Activity Leads (n=10), and an officer level working group member (n=1).
- 1 **focus group** with stakeholders from the National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse (the National Centre) on topics including the appropriateness of 1AP design, emerging outcomes and recommended focus areas for the Second Action Plan (2AP).
- Deloitte also developed 8 **case studies** to provide detailed insights into specific activities implemented through the 1AP and provide illustrated examples to demonstrate key findings and in-depth analysis. These case studies were developed through interviews with Activity Leads and a review of relevant case study documentation.

When reviewing this process evaluation report, the following caveats and limitations should be taken into consideration:

- **Low engagement from selected governance groups, including other state/territory government representatives.** Overall engagement from the Senior Governance Groups was lower than other governance groups. Participation in the evaluation was voluntary (opt-in), which may have contributed to varying levels of involvement.
- **Contained consultation scope.** It is acknowledged that some stakeholder groups who may have relevant perspectives to this evaluation may not have been invited to participate in consultations. Examples of groups include service providers and non-government organisations. This reflects time constraints and the contained scope of this evaluation.
- **Limited discussion on cohorts of children who are identified to be at risk of harm.** It is acknowledged that in some states/ territories, specific cohorts of children are identified as at risk of harm, abuse and neglect. Primary data collected from this evaluation (via surveys and consultation) has however not flagged these issues. This issue is therefore not covered in this report's key findings and recommendations.
- **Limited detailed data on governance arrangements.** Assessment on accountability mechanisms has been completed based on stakeholder feedback and Terms of Reference documentation for specific governance groups.
- **Representativeness of stakeholders who opted in to participate in semi-structured interviews.** A greater number of stakeholders from non-government consultative groups opted to participate in stakeholder interviews compared to officer level working groups and Senior Governance Groups. Deloitte also did not conduct semi-structured interviews with all government agencies that served as Activity Leads.
- **Variations in the quality and comprehensiveness of data collected on individual 1AP activities.** There was substantive variation in the quality and completeness of data on individual 1AP activities. The National Office sought to address this through the provision of high-level information on the implementation status of individual 1AP activities; however, granular detail on funding for individual 1AP activities has not been included in this report due to confidentiality reasons.
- **Limited information on the delivery timeframes of individual 1AP activities.** The activities under the 1AP vary significantly according to their scope, ambition and resource intensity, which in turn influence their expected delivery timeframes.
- **Limited data on outcomes.** The findings and recommendations from this evaluation are dependent on cross-sectional data available at a given point in time. Findings regarding the 1AP's implementation, impact and achievement of outcomes are based on what can be observed regarding its apparent contribution so far, as distinct from definitive findings about attributable cause and effect. Deloitte received limited data to support robust assessments on the effectiveness of 1AP activities, as a large proportion of activities are midway through implementation, and limited data on outcomes have been collected at this stage.

Overall evaluation findings

Design

The 1AP aspires to address child sexual abuse through a range of activities that reflect its multifactorial nature and the diverse settings in which it occurs. The design of the 1AP was broadly perceived to be aligned with the objectives of the National Strategy as most were a direct response to the Royal Commission's recommendations. Stakeholders commended the process of co-designing 1AP activities due to the opportunities for input from various stakeholders, including priority population cohorts. However, both government and non-government stakeholders considered the 1AP to be ambitious due to the breadth of activities included with varying degrees of funding and investment. This was partly driven by an overall lack of clarity on how to prioritise selected individual 1AP activities over others given the resourcing available to deliver 1AP activities.

There was also scope to improve the design of individual activities. Some activities were perceived to be too broad or more operational in nature. Some activities were also developed with the intention to be delivered over the lifetime of the ten-year National Strategy. While it is appropriate to have a mix of short- and longer-term reforms within action plans, the lack of specific implementation timeframes within publicly available documentation created misaligned expectations among non-government stakeholders on what should be achieved by the end of the original 1AP timeframes (2021-24).

Efficiency

The 1AP overall reported varying levels of implementation progress. Based on National Office provided data in July 2025, 58% of (or 36 out of 62) 1AP activities are assessed to either be completed (no further actions required) or fully implemented.⁷ The remaining 42% activities (or 26 out of 62 1AP activities) remain in progress. Examples of activities that have been implemented include the establishment of minimum practice standards (NAP 24), the implementation of a National Victim Identification Framework (NAP 18), and the delivery of a national awareness raising campaign on child sexual abuse (NAP 6). It is acknowledged that some 1AP activities are intended to be implemented on an ongoing basis beyond the 1AP's original timeframes, and that the National Strategy has received additional funding to implement several 1AP activities in 2025-26.

Several key enabling factors supported the implementation of 1AP activities. These include:

- The selection of appropriate community-based providers to support the design and rollout of community-based services
- Engagements with priority groups such as First Nations communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and young people during the initial implementation stages for some activities.
- The diversity of membership across individual governance groups, which has allowed for the sharing of diverse perspectives on key issues.
- Embedding flexibility in activity implementation to allow Activity Leads to adapt according to emerging needs
- The completion of initial research and engagement activities to identify service gaps, community needs and preferences.

In terms of implementation challenges, Activity Leads who were consulted noted that the time required to undertake scoping, research and initial stakeholder engagement activities contributed to inevitable delays to activity implementation. Activity Leads also noted that there was an underestimation in the specialist capabilities and the level of resourcing required to implement activities that are more complex and large-scale in nature. Some activities also reportedly did not receive funding for staffing resources, which exacerbated financial constraints and led to requests for further funding and/or requests to reprioritise funding from other 1AP activities. Other commonly cited implementation challenges included differences in service system arrangements across jurisdictions and low awareness and understanding of 1AP among stakeholder groups that are not part of governance groups or directly involved in the implementation of 1AP (e.g. peak bodies, service providers).

⁷ Implemented activities refer to instances where the development of delivery phase of individual activities have been completed and the product/service has been launched. Further action or reporting are still required.

There is mixed evidence that the 1AP was implemented efficiently. The implementation of selected 1AP activities benefited from the usage of providers who have relevant experience and expertise. However, stakeholders also identified missed opportunities for greater efficiency gains through improved collaboration between relevant federal and state/territory governments. Some Activity Leads perceived 1AP activities to be implemented in silos despite being complementary in nature with other ongoing reforms, both within the National Strategy and other relevant reforms – for example, ongoing child safety, child protection and gender-based violence reforms occurring at federal and state/territory levels.

Implementation

The implementation of the National Strategy was intended to be underpinned by five key values which relate to all stakeholders' collective responsibility of child safety, the prioritisation of the views and experiences of victims and survivors as well as children and young people, the need to hear and value the diverse views of all Australians and the importance of ensuring evidence, research and evaluation.

Implementing reforms in the child safety sector presents unique and significant challenges. This work centres on the wellbeing, safety and lived experiences of children and young people and therefore requires deep relational work, culturally safe engagement and an understanding of the diverse contexts and experiences of the communities involved. Despite these challenges, there is evidence that most Activity Leads considered all five National Strategy values throughout the process of designing and implementing activities. Most 1AP activities established structured mechanisms to engage with priority groups such as First Nations communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and children and young people. However, the depth and consistency of engagement varied as many stakeholders faced barriers to discussing child sexual abuse.

This evaluation has also identified scope to elevate child safety as a shared responsibility among all relevant stakeholders. While jurisdictional representation is embedded in the 1AP's governance model, there are limited accountability mechanisms for state and territory governments' activities. Within this context, stronger governance mechanisms, such as a national partnership agreement between the Commonwealth and the states and territories, could improve accountability mechanisms. Stakeholders familiar with the design of the 1AP noted that Australia's federated structure imposes challenges in harmonising national approaches to important activities such as support service provision to victims and survivors. This reflects the challenge of balancing the benefits of harmonised national approaches while also considering the potential gains from flexibility for state/territory governments to implement local approaches suited to their context and needs.

In the area of evaluation, the approaches to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of 1AP are highly varied and contingent upon the nature of the activity and the prioritisation of evaluation by Activity Leads. The lack of resourcing was identified as a key barrier that prevented a more holistic evaluation of 1AP activities. Evaluation processes could also be better aligned to the National Strategy's Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (M&E Framework) – for example, through an alignment of activity-specific outcomes to the medium- and long-term outcomes of the National Strategy. This was not possible for 1AP activities as the M&E Framework was formally released in June 2024 (towards the end of the 1AP's original implementation timeframes of 2021-24) but should ideally be a priority for future action plans.

Effectiveness

There is evidence that successfully implemented 1AP activities have contributed to the following outcomes – (1) increased community awareness and discussion about child sexual abuse, (2) the establishment of targeted resources and legal services for victims and survivors, (3) establishment of governance arrangements and frameworks which will assist in harmonising national approaches and (4) the generation of new evidence through the establishment of Australia's first study on the prevalence of child maltreatment. These 1AP activities have established a foundation that can be built on in the 2AP. However, given that a large proportion of activities remain in progress, the 1AP has not achieved the desired outcomes at the desired scale and scope at the end of its original four-year timeframe.⁸

Lessons learnt

The earlier experiences of designing and implementing 1AP have generated the following lessons:

⁸ It is noted that the Australian Government invested additional funding of \$21.2 million to implement several 1AP activities over 2025-26

1.	There are significant differences in the nature and type of child sexual abuse (e.g., intrafamilial child sexual abuse and child sexual abuse perpetrated in institutional settings). Future actions need to be scoped appropriately to acknowledge these nuances.
2.	It is important to design specific and targeted actions with clearly specified implementation timeframes.
3.	An initial investment in time and resourcing is required in the early stages of activity implementation to understand community needs, assess the readiness of service system(s), engage relevant subject matter experts and develop relationships with stakeholders.
4.	Regular communication on 1AP achievements to all relevant stakeholders (including the general public, service providers and peak bodies) is critical to maintain enthusiasm for reforms and elevate credibility of the National Strategy.
5.	Stakeholder buy-in from state/territory governments and a strong authorising environment are important to facilitate collaboration and reform momentum for multi-year national reforms such as the National Strategy.
6.	There are ethical and cultural considerations when engaging on a topic such as child sexual abuse, particularly with specific priority groups, including children and young people. This is particularly critical in relation to ensuring culturally safe and respectful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This needs to be taken into consideration during the planning and resourcing of activities
7.	More data should be collected to enable more robust assessments on the impact of government investment in child sexual abuse reforms.
8.	Community-based approaches are recommended for activities which involve the establishment of new services for a particular community.

Recommendations

This evaluation has identified five key recommendations to improve the design and implementation of the next National Strategy action plan:

1. **Develop more targeted and specific activities with a combination of “quick wins” and longer-term reforms. All activities should adhere to the SMART principles (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound).**

The National Office can consider ensuring that the design of future 2AP activities to:

- **be anchored on the theme-specific Theory of Change** that has been developed for the National Strategy (as articulated in the National Strategy’s M&E Framework)⁹.
- **adhere to the SMART principles** where possible and relevant. There should ideally be specificity on what activities are seeking to achieve, how success will be tracked and measurable, the resourcing required to implement activities, the problem activities are seeking to address and the expected timeframes for completion. It is however acknowledged that some activities the benefits of clear timelines and structure need to be balanced with the need to accommodate flexibility in specific contexts. In some instances, timeline adjustments may be required to ensure culturally safe, respectful and meaningful consultation with priority population cohorts. Incorporating both structured planning and culturally responsive adaptability will strengthen the effectiveness of reform implementation.
- **adopt appropriate sequencing.** Sequencing is especially critical for longer term transformations such as workforce capacity improvements. The design of future action plans needs to consider the series of incremental activities that

⁹ Commonwealth of Australia, Attorney-General’s Department, National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse (2021–2030): Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (2024).

would improve workforce capacity over time and across Action Plans; and how the impact of these activities can be measured.

Clarity on "quick wins" and longer-term reforms

Specific to timeframes, there can be greater clarity and communication at the outset on whether an individual activity will generate immediate impact (also known as a "quick win") or are **longer term reforms** (activities that require longer implementation timeframes due to the nature of these reforms).

2. Ensure scoping studies, community-specific stakeholder engagement activities and research activities are undertaken before an activity is implemented. Sufficient time and resourcing are required to support the implementation of these activities.

1AP activities that were more complex and larger scale in nature experienced implementation delays due to the need to undertake foundational work such as community engagement, research and initial scoping activities to support their implementation. Several activities also lacked clear scope and guidance on how they were intended to be implemented. This necessitated further research and scoping activities to impose a more targeted focus that is implementable. These experiences highlight the importance of undertaking research and scoping activities consistently for all activities prior to full activity implementation. Examples of scoping activities include early engagement with key stakeholder groups such as people with lived experience, relevant subject matter experts, relevant specialist services and representatives of priority population cohorts.

It is recommended for future National Strategy activities to conduct initial scoping studies, community engagement and other relevant research activities. These activities should ideally be undertaken prior to full activity implementation. To make this process effective, project plans should explicitly build in time and resourcing for scoping, engagement and research phases. This approach reduces the risk of delays or resistance during implementation and improves the likelihood of individual activities being implemented efficiently.

3. Continue and expand opportunities to communicate and celebrate National Strategy achievements and progress through more regular and transparent communication to the sector

The National Office could expand opportunities to improve overall awareness on the scope and implementation progress of National Strategy reforms. This can build on ongoing efforts to communicate the implementation progress of National Strategy activities. Potential activities to support this include the development of a communication strategy, the establishment of an accessible public reform progress dashboard, regular progress updates to governance groups and multi-channel communication approaches.

4. Strengthen governance arrangements among government stakeholders to improve collaboration and accountability mechanisms.

This evaluation has identified opportunities to improve current governance arrangements to promote two-way information sharing, strengthen accountability mechanisms and promote cross-government collaboration, both at federal and jurisdiction levels. Some examples of steps to strengthen the governance of the National Strategy include:

- Enhancing jurisdictional input during the design stages of 2AP activities.
- Developing partnership agreements or similar mechanisms to formalise partnerships, decision-making and collaboration protocols.
- Improving collaboration across governments to avoid duplication and strengthen coordination of responses. It is critical to ensure that future research and scoping activities are better aligned to minimise instances of duplication across future NAP / CAP activities.

5. Establish more consistent and comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms to enable robust assessments of the degree to which future action plan activities have contributed to medium- and long-term outcomes included in the National Strategy's M&E Framework.

The approach to evaluating the effectiveness and impact of National Strategy activities could be more consistent and aligned with the National Strategy's M&E Framework. This can be achieved through:

- Encouraging the establishment of consistent embedded evaluation approaches across reform activities.
- Ensuring the intended outcomes of individual activities are aligned with those included in the overarching M&E Framework.
- Integrate the voice of service providers as well as victims and survivors in monitoring and evaluation.
- Ensuring there is sufficient resourcing to support consistent monitoring and evaluation approaches.
- Ensuring existing governance arrangements support ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the National Strategy.
- Establishing realistic and sufficient timeframes for data collection and stakeholder engagement.

Note:

This report includes key findings and recommendations for the evaluation. Report appendices are provided in separate files. Please refer to:

1. **Interim Report: Appendix A** for further detail on all 1AP Case studies
2. **Interim Report: Appendix B-F** for further detail on related strategies, frameworks and other mechanisms to support children and young people (Appendix B); consultation guides (Appendix C); survey analysis (Appendix D); Model for Great Policy Advice (Appendix E), and implementation status of individual 1AP activities (Appendix F).

1. Introduction.

This chapter provides a summary of the evaluation context, the National Strategy (including the First Action Plans).

1.1 Background

Child sexual abuse can have life-long detrimental impacts for victims and survivors and cause ongoing trauma for themselves, their family and future generations. Based on data from the Australian Child Maltreatment Study (ACMS), in 2021:¹⁰

- Over one in four (28.5%) Australians have experienced sexual abuse before the age of 18.
- Over one in three (35.2%) Australian women aged 16-24 have experienced child sexual abuse.
- Nearly one in five (18.8%) Australian men have experienced sexual abuse before the age of 18.¹¹

The long-term impacts of child sexual abuse on victims and survivors are extensive. The ACMS further found that children who experienced maltreatment (which includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, and exposure to domestic violence) are 2.8 times more likely to have any mental disorder and are 4.6 times more likely to have current post-traumatic stress disorder.¹² Child sexual abuse poses significant economic and social costs due to lost well-being and reduced capacity to engage in future productive employment. Deloitte Access Economics estimates the lifetime cost for new cases of violence against children and young people to be \$16.1 billion in 2016-17.¹³

The impacts of child sexual abuse can lead to profound developmental, physical, and social difficulties, disrupting key aspects of life such as education and employment. The stigma and feeling of humiliation often associated with such abuse frequently deters victims and survivors from disclosing their experiences, further exacerbating their trauma. Certain abuse characteristics – such as the strategies employed by perpetrators to ensure victims' silence and secrecy – also act as barriers to disclosure.¹⁴ These barriers collectively limit the access of victims and survivors to essential support and intervention. Research indicates that Australians who have experienced maltreatment are over three times as probable to develop a generalised anxiety disorder, underscoring the severe mental health impacts of abuse.¹⁵ These long-term effects emphasise the critical importance of implementing effective prevention and intervention strategies to protect Australian children and facilitate recovery for victims and survivors.¹⁶

¹⁰ Haslam D, Mathews B, Pacella R, Scott JG, Finkelhor D, Higgins DJ, Meinck F, Erskine HE, Thomas HJ, Lawrence D, Malacova E. (2023). The prevalence and impact of child maltreatment in Australia: Findings from the Australian Child Maltreatment Study: Brief Report. Australian Child Maltreatment Study, Queensland University of Technology.

¹¹ Mathews B, Pacella RE, Scott JG, Finkelhor D, Meinck F, Higgins DJ, Erskine HE, Thomas HJ, Lawrence D, Haslam DM, Malacova E, Dunne MP. The prevalence of child maltreatment in Australia: findings from a national survey. *Med J Aust* 2023; 218 (6 Suppl): S13-S18. <https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.51873>.

¹² Haslam D, Mathews B, Pacella R, Scott JG, Finkelhor D, Higgins DJ, Meinck F, Erskine HE, Thomas HJ, Lawrence D, Malacova E. (2023). The prevalence and impact of child maltreatment in Australia: Findings from the Australian Child Maltreatment Study: Brief Report. Australian Child Maltreatment Study, Queensland University of Technology.

¹³ Deloitte Access Economics, The economic cost of violence against children and young people, 2019, Report for the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People (ACYC) <<https://www.deloitte.com/au/en/services/economics/perspectives/economic-cost-violence-against-children-young-people.html>>

¹⁴ Latiff, M. A., Fang, L., Goh, D. A., & Tan, L. J. (2024). A systematic review of factors associated with disclosure of child sexual abuse. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 147, 106564. <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0145213423005525>>

¹⁵ Commonwealth of Australia (2009). Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020.

¹⁶ Commonwealth of Australia (2009). Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020.

1.2 Government response to child sexual abuse

The Australian Government has implemented a range of national frameworks, strategies and inquiries to address child safety. These responses aim to strengthen child safety, prevent abuse, and improve support for victims and survivors. Further detail on these frameworks is provided in the following sections.

1.2.1 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (the Royal Commission) was established on 11 January 2013 in response to allegations of sexual abuse of children in institutional contexts. The Royal Commission's Final Report was tabled in Parliament on 15 December 2017 and made 409 recommendations, many of which aimed to make institutions safer for children and improve institutional response and reporting.

The Royal Commission highlighted the need for improved support services for victims and survivors, clearer reporting pathways, and education programs on child protection. All recommendations aimed to encourage a shift towards prioritising child safety and accountability within institutions.

Following the completion of the Royal Commission, the Australian Government took several actions in response to the findings and recommendations:

- building on the National Framework after it ended in 2020 through the development of Safe and Supported (see 1AP Appendix B.2)
- development of the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-30 (the National Strategy, see Section 1.2.2).

1.2.2 National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030

The National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030 (National Strategy) was launched in October 2021 in response to the widespread extent and impact of child sexual abuse revealed by the Royal Commission. Developed by the Australian Government in partnership with state and territory governments, the National Strategy:

- serves as a nationally coordinated strategic framework for preventing and responding to child sexual abuse which considers child sexual abuse in all settings, including online, within families and organisations
- aims to reduce the risk, extent and impact of child sexual abuse and related harms in Australia
- responds to approximately 100 Royal Commission recommendations.¹⁷

In terms of funding, the Australian Government provided \$307.5 million over five years (2021-2025) to support the implementation of the first phase of the National Strategy.¹⁸ The Australian Government invested additional funding of \$21.2 million to continue implementation of several 1AP activities over 2025-26.¹⁹

The National Strategy was developed using a public health approach, including primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary activities to better identify, prevent and respond to child sexual abuse. The National Strategy contains a vision, overarching objective and supporting values for preventing and responding to child sexual abuse (see Figure 1.1).

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¹⁷ National Office for Child Safety, 2021, National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030, <<https://www.childsafety.gov.au/resources/national-strategy-prevent-and-respond-child-sexual-abuse-2021-2030>>, accessed 1 July 2025.

¹⁸ Commonwealth of Australia. (2021, May 11). *Budget Paper No. 2: Budget Measures 2021-22* [PDF]. Treasury. Creative Commons BY 3.0 Australia. Retrieved September 2, 2025, from <https://archive.budget.gov.au/2021-22/bp2/download/bp2_2021-22.pdf>

¹⁹ Commonwealth of Australia. (2025, March 25). *Budget Paper No. 2: Budget Measures 2025-26* [PDF]. Treasury. Retrieved September 2, 2025, from .

Figure 1.1 Overview of the National Strategy

VISION				
All children and young people are protected and safe from sexual abuse. Victims and survivors are supported and empowered.				
OBJECTIVE				
The National Strategy will reduce the risk, extent and impact of child sexual abuse and related harms in Australia.				
VALUES				
Child safety is everyone's responsibility. Australian, state and territory governments, organisations, industry, communities, families, kin, carers and individuals all have a role to play.	The views and experiences of victims and survivors are a priority, and their needs shape our efforts.	Children and young people's voices and views, experiences and participation are central to the decisions we make.	We hear and value the diverse views and experiences of all Australians. The work we do to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse is: culturally safe, developmentally and age appropriate, trauma-informed, and accessible and meets diverse needs and circumstances.	Evidence, data, research and evaluation informs our policies, programs and reforms.

Source: National Office for Child Safety – National Strategy to prevent and respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030.

The National Strategy has five themes into which activities²⁰ are categorised (see Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2: The five themes under the National Strategy

Theme 1: Awareness raising, education and building child safe cultures	Theme 2: Supporting and empowering victims and survivors	Theme 3: Enhancing national approach to children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours	Theme 4: Offending prevention and intervention	Theme 5: Improving the evidence base
Theme 1 underscores the necessity for better and targeted child sexual abuse education. It focuses on raising awareness to prevent abuse and provide victims, advocates, and the broader community with essential information. Additionally, it seeks to combat misinformation, misconceptions, and stigma.	Theme 2 addresses the profound and lasting effects of child sexual abuse, which can impact victims' mental and physical health, relationships, and overall life outcomes. The focus is on providing trauma-informed, culturally safe support to help victims and survivors, as well as offering support to family members and caregivers.	Theme 3 focuses on establishing a national, comprehensive and coordinated policy approach for preventing, identifying or responding to children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours. The strategy emphasises the importance of early intervention and support services to prevent these individuals from offending.	Theme 4 focuses on preventing offending and reoffending through early intervention and targeted strategies. This theme emphasises the importance of evidence-based prevention programs and effective intervention measures to stop abuse before it occurs and to prevent recidivism among known offenders.	Theme 5 emphasises the importance of strengthening the evidence base to inform policies and practices related to child sexual abuse. By building a robust evidence base, the strategy aims to ensure that responses to child sexual abuse are grounded in the best available knowledge and are continuously improved based on emerging insights.

Source: National Office for Child Safety – National Strategy to prevent and respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030.

The National Strategy is being implemented through action plans – the [First National Action Plan](#) (NAP, located on page 33 of the National Strategy) and the [First Commonwealth Action Plan](#) (CAP), collectively referred to as the 1AP. The two plans under 1AP share the same values and objective. 1AP activities vary in their scale and complexity – some activities are more administrative and readily achievable, whereas others require sustained effort from multiple stakeholders over long periods to complete.

Future action plans will follow and build upon the progress made by the 1AP and lessons learned.

1.2.3 First National Action Plan

The NAP contains 29 activities to be implemented by designated Activity Leads from the Australian Government in partnership with state and territory governments and sector stakeholders where appropriate. The NAP contains activities across each of the five themes, but contains all the combined 1AP's activities on Theme 3 (Enhancing national approaches to children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours), which has been developed to respond to an identified absence of nationally coordinated approaches to prevent, identify and respond to children who have displayed harmful sexual

²⁰ Note: It is acknowledged that the term "activities" and "measures" are used interchangeably when referring to the initiatives under the National Strategy and its action plans. For consistency in this report, the evaluation has adopted the term "activity" throughout – see Glossary.

behaviours. A key component underpinning the activities in Theme 5 is improving the evidence base about the nature, causes and impacts of child sexual abuse in Australia. The majority of activities under Theme 5 are contained in the NAP.

The NAP is delivered by the National Office within AGD, alongside other Australian government agencies:

- The National Office is solely responsible for the implementation of 12 of 29 NAP activities (or 41% of all NAP activities).
- 7 activities (or 25% of all NAP activities) are jointly implemented by the National Office and the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DHDA).
- The remaining 10 activities (or 34% of all NAP activities) are being implemented by other government agencies such as the Australian Federal Police (AFP), Department of Education, the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

1.2.4 First Commonwealth Action Plan

The CAP contains 33 activities for which the Australian Government assumes primary responsibility in preventing and responding to child sexual abuse. The majority of CAP activities fall under Theme 4 (Offending prevention and intervention) and include aims such as strengthening online intelligence capabilities and building the capability of overseas partner nations to respond to child sexual abuse. Additionally, the CAP emphasises improving intersectoral collaboration, such as between education and healthcare domains, to support victims and survivors more effectively (Theme 2).

The CAP is predominantly delivered by other Australian government agencies:

- The National Office is solely responsible for the implementation of 8 of 33 CAP activities (or 24% of all CAP activities).
- The Attorney-General's Department (divisions which sit outside the National Office) lead the implementation of 5 of 33 activities (or 15% of all CAP activities).
- The remaining 20 activities (or 60% of all CAP activities) are implemented by other government agencies such as the AFP, eSafety Commissioner (eSafety), Department of Home Affairs, NIAA, the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC), and the AIHW.

1.3 Strategies and frameworks to support children and young people

Government responses to child sexual abuse have been developed as part of a broader suite of strategies and frameworks to support children and young people. This includes some prominent strategies designed to support the safety and wellbeing of Australia's children, women and families, which have been overseen by the Department of Social Services (DSS). Please see Appendix B for further information on these strategies and frameworks.

2. Evaluation approach.

This chapter describes the approach undertaken to inform the evaluation of the National Strategy's First Action Plans.

2.1 The purpose and scope of this evaluation

The National Office engaged Deloitte to deliver an independent implementation (process) evaluation of the National Strategy's 1AP. The overarching objective of the evaluation was to determine whether the 1AP was delivered as intended, including key achievements, opportunities for enhancements and progress against intended outcomes.

Specifically, the evaluation's focus is on the period between 2021 and 2024 and will aim to assess the extent to which the 1AP:

- was effective and efficient
- aligned with National Strategy values
- aligned with and supported progress towards the National Strategy's outcomes and objectives
- embedded evaluation and continuous improvement mechanisms within the design, development and implementation of activities.

2.2 Key evaluation questions

Table 2.1 outlines the key evaluation questions which were developed in collaboration with the National Office and National Strategy advisory group members.

Table 2.1: Evaluation questions

Evaluation domain	Key evaluation questions	Sub-evaluation questions
Design 	1. To what extent was the design of the 1AP appropriate to support its intended outcome?	1.1 Were the objectives and goals of the 1AP clearly defined and aligned with the National Strategy?
		1.2 Were the strategies and activities appropriately designed to meet the intended outcomes?
Efficiency 	2. To what extent has the 1AP been implemented in a timely, cost-effective manner with quality use of inputs?	2.1 Were the planned activities executed within the designated timeframe and budget?
		2.2 How effectively were resources (financial, human, material) utilised during implementation?
		2.3 What were the key challenges faced during implementation; and how were these challenges addressed?
Implementation 	3. To what extent did the implementation of the 1AP activities reflect the National Strategy values?	3.1 How were the core values of the National Strategy integrated into the 1AP activities?
		3.2 To what extent did activity owners use evaluation artefacts (for example: theory of change, program logic, data matrix) to design and plan for evaluation?
		3.3 To what extent have the governance arrangements been effective in facilitating the implementation of actions?

Effectiveness 	4. To what extent do victims-survivors and members of other priority groups feel engaged in the Action Plan implementation evaluation and reporting?	4.1 To what extent were victims, survivors, and other priority groups involved in the planning and execution of the Action Plan?
		4.2 To what extent has feedback from victims, survivors and other priority groups been addressed in the implementation, evaluation, and reporting of the Action Plan?
	5. To what extent have key outputs from activities (developed by National Strategy Activity Leads) achieved short-term outcomes? How has this contributed to medium- and long-term outcomes? Have there been any unintended consequences?	5.1 What measurable short-term outcomes have been achieved as a result of the 1AP activities?
		5.2 To what extent have these short-term outcomes contributed to the expected medium- and long-term outcomes?
Improvement opportunities 	6. Are there opportunities for improvement in relation to program fidelity?	6.1 What are the key lessons from the implementation of 1AP, and how can this be applied to enhance the design and implementation of future action plans?

Source: Deloitte Access Economics.

2.3 Overview of evaluation approach

The National Strategy First Action Plans Evaluation (1AP Evaluation or ‘this evaluation’) was conducted across four key phases from December 2024 to November 2025:

- Phase 1: Planning.** Deloitte conducted an evaluation planning workshop. Feedback from the workshop informed the development of a project plan and stakeholder consultation, and data collection plan. The National Office also completed an Internal Research Ethics Committee assessment of the stakeholder consultation and data collection plan to ensure appropriate stakeholder engagement and data management procedures were undertaken.
- Phase 2: Audit of policy documents.** Deloitte completed a detailed desktop audit of key policy documents relevant to the 1AP. The desktop audit reviewed publicly available documentation and content identified by the Department to make an initial assessment of the 1AP’s progress against the Key Evaluation Questions (see Table 2.1). The analysis and insights from the desktop audit were collated in the Desktop Review Report. Additionally, the Desktop Review Report identified data limitations and gaps from the desktop audit to be addressed through primary data collection activities in Phase 3.
- Phase 3: Data collection.** The evaluation adopted a mixed-methods approach for collecting primary data from 1AP stakeholders (see Section 2.4 for the data sources for this evaluation). Primary data was gathered through the tailored surveys, opt-in semi-structured interviews, case study interviews and the focus group with the National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse (the National Centre).
- Phase 4: Reporting.** The analysis of all data collected during the 1AP Evaluation underpinned its draft findings and recommendations. These were first presented, tested and refined in a National Strategy Governance and Principles Workshop with the National Office. The findings were presented to the National Clinical Reference Group (NCRG) on 20 June 2025. These meetings further informed the preparation of the Interim Evaluation Report (this report), which addressed each Key Evaluation Question in detail to support the findings and recommendations. Following its submission to the National Office for its review of the Interim Evaluation Report on 1 August 2025, the findings and recommendations were presented to the Child Safe Sectors Leadership Group on 5 August 2025 and the National Strategy Advisory Group on 5 September 2025.

2.4 Data sources

The evaluation findings and recommendations have been developed based on evidence drawn from several sources.

2.4.1 Surveys

Four tailored surveys were developed – one each for senior governance groups, non-government consultative groups, Activity Leads (distributed in May 2025), and officer level working groups distributed in June 2025 to address emerging data limitations from the stakeholder engagement process (see Section 2.5).

Senior Governance Groups

Senior Governance Groups (SGGs) are responsible for overseeing the implementation of the 1AP. The Strategic Management Group (SMG) oversees the progress of the overall NAP and its individual activities. It also provides information, updates and escalates issues and decisions to the Senior Oversight Group (SOG) as appropriate. Both the SMG and SOG have memberships drawn from each state and territory as well as the Commonwealth, which provides the permanent chair for each group (one rotating co-chair for each group is nominated by jurisdictional representatives). The National Strategy Policy Working Group (NSPWG) performs a similar role to the SMG for the CAP. The SGGs survey was sent to 35 unique recipients.

Non-Government Consultative Groups

Three Non-Government Consultative Groups (NGCGs) were established to support the design, implementation and evaluation of National Strategy activities. All three groups include membership from the National Strategy's priority groups:

- The National Strategy Advisory Group (NSAG) provides advice and input on the implementation of the National Strategy and the 1AP, and in so doing aims to embed the views and experiences of priority groups into the design, implementation and evaluation activities of the 1AP. Membership includes representatives from priority groups who also represent government organisations, academia, and community organisations.
- The National Clinical Reference Group (NCRG) provides expert advice on the design, implementation and evaluation of activities related to children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours. Its membership is primarily constituted of health professionals, clinicians and researchers who have experience with children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours.
- The Child Safe Sectors Leadership Group (CSSLG) provides advice and shares information about what governments and organisations can do to keep children and young people safe and well. Membership includes representatives of national peak bodies and large organisations that work with children and young people.

The NGCG survey was sent to 101 unique recipients.

Activity Leads

Each activity in the 1AP is assigned to an 'Activity Lead': an Australian Government organisation primarily responsible for its implementation and evaluation (see Sections 1.2.3 and 1.2.4 for further information on Activity Leads). The Activity Leads survey was sent to 23 unique recipients.

Officer Level Working Groups

Eight interjurisdictional Officer Level Working Groups (OLWGs) provide a national forum for coordination and implementation of relevant individual National Strategy activities. Of those, the National Office distributed the survey to the following five OLWGs:

- Child Safe Organisations Working Group (CSOWG)
- Children who have displayed Harmful Sexual Behaviours Working Group (CHSBWG)
- Information Sharing Working Group (ISWG)
- Research, Evaluation and Data Working Group (REDWG)
- Victim Support and Workforce Development Working Group (VSWDWG).

The OLWGs survey was sent to 150 unique recipients.

Deloitte designed each survey to align with key evaluation questions (see Table 2.1) and the outcomes in the M&E Framework, and were reviewed by the National Office. The survey included background questions on the respondent's experiences with the National Strategy and the 1AP to ensure they were only asked questions on the plans, themes and outcomes relevant to their experience. Deloitte coded the survey in Qualtrics and conducted internal testing before it was

provided to the National Office to test. These focused on optimising each survey's relevance, brevity and usability. Following finalisation of each survey, the National Office distributed the surveys and sent reminders to recipients via email. Table 2.2 below summarises the response rates and number of responses received for all four surveys (see Appendix D for questions and analysis for each survey, including aggregated analysis for common questions across the surveys).

Table 2.2: Overview of 1AP Evaluation survey participation

Survey	Responses received	Number of unique recipients	Response rate (percentage)
Non-Government Consultative Groups	23	101	22.8
Senior Governance Groups	6	35	17.1
Activity Leads	10	23	43.5
Officer Level Working Groups	10	150	6.7
Total	49	309	15.8

Source: Deloitte Access Economics.

2.4.2 Semi-structured interviews and focus groups

2.4.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

Deloitte conducted semi-structured interviews with stakeholders who expressed interest in participating by sending an email to the dedicated shared inbox. These interviews were designed to support the survey, which was intended to be the primary tool for gathering data to support the evaluation.

In total, 16 semi-structured interviews were completed: 11 with NGCGs, 2 with Activity Leads, 2 with SGGs, and 1 with OLWGs. These interviews were one hour in duration and were conducted virtually on Microsoft Teams (see Appendix C for the semi-structured interview guides).

2.4.2.2 Focus group meeting with the National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse

Deloitte conducted a two-hour focus group with stakeholders from the National Centre. The focus group questions aligned with the evaluation questions and were conducted with stakeholders across the National Centre, including the CEO and senior staff members. Topics covered in the focus group include appropriateness of the 1AP design, emerging outcomes and recommended focus areas for the 2AP.

2.4.3 Case studies

2.4.3.1 Purpose and selection

Case studies provide detailed insight into specific actions implemented through the 1AP and provide illustrated examples to demonstrate key findings and in-depth analysis. These case studies were intended to highlight the following aspects:

- barriers faced during implementation; and innovative practices to support implementation
- supporting evidence for specific evaluation outcomes and early signs of short-term outcomes being achieved
- key lessons learnt and implications for the implementation of similar types of actions in future action plans.

2.4.3.2 Case study approach

The approach to undertaking case studies followed the following process:

- The National Office identified appropriate case studies based on the above criteria and provided a list of case studies and contact details of Activity Leads (see Table 2.3).
- Deloitte conducted a virtual semi-structured interview with Activity Leads. Following the interview, selected Activity Leads provided relevant activity documentation to Deloitte for review.

- Case studies were then drafted and provided to Activity Leads for review prior to inclusion in the interim report.

In total, Deloitte developed 8 case study interviews as part of this evaluation. These case studies are included in a separate document titled 1AP Evaluation – Interim Report_Appendix A (Case Studies).

Table 2.3: Case studies

No.	Action Plan	Theme	Activity number	Activity descriptor	Lead implementation agency	Data sources	Appendix
1	National Action Plan	Theme 1: Awareness raising, education and building child safe cultures	6	Deliver a national awareness raising campaign on child sexual abuse	National Office for Child Safety	Case study interview, publicly available information, and documentation provided by the National Office for Child Safety	A.1
2	National Action Plan	Theme 3: Enhancing national approaches to children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours	14	Set up a national clinical framework for responding to children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours	National Office for Child Safety and the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing	Case study interview and publicly available information	A.2
3	National Action Plan	Theme 5: Improving the evidence base	29	Develop a scoping study for and establish an Australian Child Wellbeing Data Asset	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare	Case study interview and publicly available information	A.3
4	Commonwealth Action Plan	Theme 1: Awareness raising, education and building child safe cultures	4	Prevent online harms and promote safe online practices for children and young people	eSafety Commissioner	Case study interview, publicly available information, and documentation provided by the Safety Commissioner	A.4
5	Commonwealth Action Plan	Theme 1: Awareness raising, education and building	6	Raise public awareness of the important role of the digital industry in combatting online harms	National Office for Child Safety	Case study interview, publicly available information, and documentation provided by the	A.5

		child safe cultures				National Office for Child Safety	
6	Commonwealth Action Plan	Theme 2: Supporting and empowering victims and survivors	7	Develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing approaches	National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA)	Case study interview, publicly available information, and documentation National Indigenous Australians Agency	A.6
7	Commonwealth Action Plan	Theme 2: Supporting and empowering victims and survivors	9	Set up an online chat service to deliver free legal assistance services to children and young people experiencing or at risk of harm (including sexual abuse)	Youth Law Australia (YLA)	Case study interview, publicly available information, and documentation provided by Youth Law Australia	A.7
8	Commonwealth Action Plan	Theme 4	21	Strengthen law and justice frameworks in the Indo-Pacific region	National Office for Child Safety	Case study interview, publicly available information, and documentation provided by the National Office for Child Safety	A.8

2.5 Caveats and limitations

When reviewing this process evaluation report, the following caveats and limitations should be taken into consideration:

- **Low engagement from selected governance groups, including other state/territory government representatives.** Overall engagement from the Senior Governance Groups was lower than other governance groups. Participation in the evaluation was voluntary (opt-in), which may have contributed to varying levels of involvement. Throughout this report, Deloitte has highlighted instances where specific feedback was provided by government and/or non-government stakeholders.
- **Contained consultation scope.** It is acknowledged that some stakeholder groups who may have relevant perspectives to this evaluation may not have been invited to participate in consultations. Examples of groups include service providers, non-government organisations. This reflects time constraints and the contained scope of this evaluation's consultation approach (which the National Office determined).
- **Limited discussion on cohorts of children who are identified to be at risk of harm.** It is acknowledged that in some states/ territories, specific cohorts of children are identified as at risk of harm, abuse and neglect. Examples include

children that are in formal foster care, in a formal kinship arrangement, or are on a long-term protection order.²¹ Some children and young people who share individual, socio-demographic and cultural characteristics may also experience higher rates of domestic, family and sexual violence.²² Primary data collected from this evaluation (via surveys and consultation) has however not flagged these issues and as such is not covered in this report's key findings and recommendations.

- **Limited detailed data on governance arrangements.** Assessment on accountability mechanisms has been completed based on stakeholder feedback and Terms of Reference documentation for specific governance groups.
- **Representativeness of stakeholders who opted in to participate in semi-structured interviews.** A greater number of stakeholders from non-government consultative groups opted to participate in stakeholder interviews compared to officer level working groups and Senior Governance Groups (only 1 officer level working group member opted to participate in a semi-structured interview). Deloitte did not conduct semi-structured interviews with all government agencies that served as Activity Leads. Selected government agencies (eSafety, NIAA, AIHW) were interviewed as part of case studies. As interviews occurred on an opt-in basis, Deloitte did not conduct interviews with the AFP, Department of Home Affairs, the Australian Institute of Criminology and the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission because they did not opt-in to participate in interviews.
- **Variations in the quality and comprehensiveness of data collected on individual 1AP activities.** There was substantive variation in the quality and completeness of data on individual 1AP activities. Deloitte received additional data on actual expenditure, budget, implementation timeframes for selected 1AP activities (particularly those that were selected to be case studies and National Office staff members who were Activity Leads). The National Office sought to address this through the provision of high-level information on the implementation status of individual 1AP activities; however, granular detail on funding for individual 1AP activities has not been included in this report due to confidentiality reasons. Deloitte has highlighted instances of data limitations throughout this report in relevant sections.
- **Limited information on the delivery timeframes of individual 1AP activities.** The activities under the 1AP vary significantly according to their scope, ambition and resource intensity, which in turn influence their expected delivery timeframes. Not all activities contained in the 1AP were intended to be completed within the official timeframes of 1AP (2021-24). It is noted that the Australian Government provided additional funding to implement several 1AP activities in 2025-26. The finalised delivery timeframes for individual 1AP activities were not provided to Deloitte. This detracts from the evaluation's ability to make an informed assessment of the 1AP's implementation progress to date.
- **Limited data on outcomes.** The findings and recommendations from this evaluation are dependent on cross-sectional data available at a given point in time. Findings regarding the 1AP's implementation, impact and achievement of outcomes are based on what can be observed regarding its apparent contribution so far, as distinct from definitive findings about attributable cause and effect. Deloitte received limited data to support robust assessments on the effectiveness of 1AP activities, as a large proportion of activities are midway through implementation, and limited data on outcomes have been collected at this stage.

²¹ Department of Education, Australian Government. (2025, October 3). *Identifying a child at risk* (Additional Child Care Subsidy: Child wellbeing). <<https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/providers/additional-child-care-subsidy/child-wellbeing/identifying-child-risk>>.

²² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2025, July 30). Children and young people: Family, domestic and sexual violence — population groups. Retrieved from <<https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/population-groups/children-and-young-people>>.

3. Design.

This section assesses the extent to which the 1AP and its activities were designed to align with achieving the National Strategy's intended outcome.

Table 3.1 Mapping relevant sections responding to the key evaluation questions and sub-evaluation questions

Domain	Key evaluation question	Sub-evaluation question	Relevant section
Design	To what extent was the design of the 1AP appropriate to support its intended outcome?	Were the objectives and goals of the 1AP clearly defined and aligned with the National Strategy?	3.1
		Were the strategies and activities appropriately designed to meet the intended outcomes?	3.2

3.1 Were the objectives and goals of the 1AP clearly defined and aligned with the National Strategy?

3.1.1 Objectives and goals of 1AP and the National Strategy

The National Strategy has a clearly defined vision and objective in its official documentation:

- The vision for the National Strategy is to ensure that “*all children and young people are protected and safe from sexual abuse. Victims and survivors are supported and empowered.*”
- The overarching objective for the National Strategy is to reduce the risk, extent and impact of child sexual abuse and related harms in Australia.²³

The activities included in the National Strategy's 1AP aimed to support the achievement of its objective and vision. Both government and non-government stakeholders who were consulted perceived that the 1AP's vision and objectives were appropriate. 4 out of 6 Senior Government Group survey respondents indicated that the design of the 1AP was clear and comprehensive in its objectives (3 'agree', 1 'strongly agree', n=6). Similarly, 9 out of 10 Officer Level Working Group survey respondents agreed and strongly agreed with this statement.

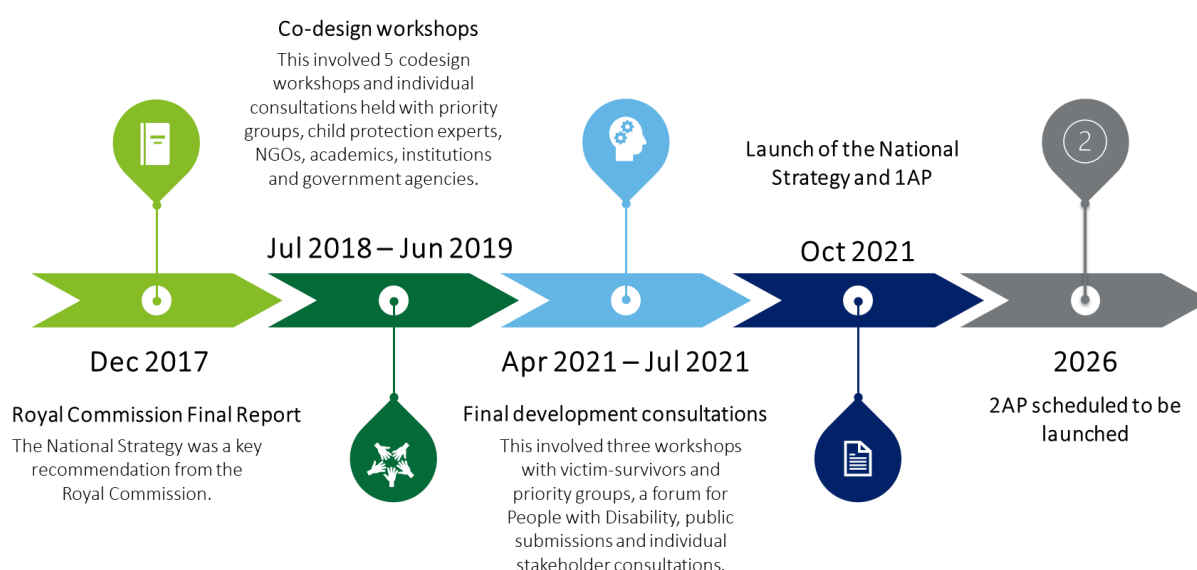
3.1.2 Alignment between 1AP and National Strategy values

The design of the 1AP (including its activities) is broadly aligned with the values articulated in the National Strategy. This is driven by extensive co-design processes with key stakeholder groups, including those with lived experience.

In acknowledgement of the complex and multifactorial nature of child sexual abuse, the National Strategy was developed following extensive consultation processes with government stakeholders and priority population cohorts. From 2018 onwards, the National Office conducted a two-stage co-design process of consultations and stakeholder engagement to inform the development of the National Strategy and its accompanying CAP and NAP. In total, the National Office conducted 14 non-government workshops, forums and discussions with peak bodies, groups and individuals, a written submission process through which over 600 non-government stakeholders were invited to participate, and extensive deliberations with Australian, state and territory governments (see Figure 3.1).

²³ Commonwealth of Australia, National Office for Child Safety, National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030 (2021).

Figure 3.1: Timeline of the development of 1AP and National Strategy



Source: Deloitte Access Economics.

Activity Leads and NGCG survey respondents were more likely to agree that the design of the 1AP included consideration of National Strategy values. Officer Level Working Group and Senior Governance Group survey respondents (which included state/territory stakeholders) expressed mixed views in this area. This potentially indicates information gaps due to their limited involvement in the design process:

- 8 out of 10 Activity Leads and 2 out of 6 Senior Governance Group members agreed that the design of the 1AP was informed by feedback from all relevant stakeholders. 3 out of 10 Officer Level Working Group members agreed with this statement (with 2 survey respondents disagreeing and 4 survey respondents noting that they were unsure).
- 7 out of 8 NSAG members agreed that the design of the 1AP incorporates diverse perspectives, including those of community members and non-government organisations.
- 6 out of 8 NSAG members agreed that the design of the 1AP adequately reflects the needs and experiences of victims and survivors.

Table 3.2 provides more detailed evidence that indicates that the design of the 1AP was aligned with National Strategy values.

Table 3.2 Assessment on the alignment between the 1AP's design and the National Strategy's Values

Value	Evidence of the design of the 1AP's alignment with National Strategy Values
Child safety is everyone's responsibility. Australian, state and territory governments, organisations, communities, families, kin, carers, and individuals all have a role to play.	• The design of the 1AP involved engagement with various government and non-government stakeholders (see Section 3.1.2). 7 out of 8 National Strategy Advisory Group (NSAG) survey respondents indicated the design of the 1AP incorporates diverse perspectives, including those of community members and non-government organisations (5 'agree', 2 'strongly agree', n=8). • Theme 1 has a focus on building awareness, which reflects the collective responsibility of everyone in the community and child safety sector to respond to and prevent child sexual abuse. • Selected 1AP activities focus on empowering and prompting families, communities, and carers to take an active role in promoting child safety. For example, the 'One Talk at a

	Time' awareness campaign delivered under NAP 6 aims to help adults understand that child sexual abuse is preventable and encourages them to have ongoing conversations to protect children and young people. 1AP also includes the development of resources and tools that support all organisations to be child safe. For example, the National Office is developing a new child safety annual reporting framework under NAP 2 to support organisations in implementing good practice child safety policies and processes to embed cultures that prioritise the best interests of all children.
The views and experiences of victims and survivors are a priority, and their needs shape our efforts.	- The National Strategy and 1AP were developed in response to recommendations of the Royal Commission, which was informed by an extensive consultation process with victims and survivors. The Royal Commission comprised 8,000 private sessions and 1,000 written accounts from victims and survivors, children and young people, people with disability at the time of abuse, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors, survivors from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and survivors in prison at the time of engagement. - The views and experiences of victims and survivors influenced the design and implementation of 1AP through several facets, including written submissions, workshops and individual consultations held with victims and survivors and their advocates. NSAG survey respondents reinforced this view: 6 out of 8 respondents indicated that the design of the 1AP adequately reflects the needs and experiences of victims and survivors (5 'agree', 1 'strongly agree', n=8). - Representatives of victims and survivors and their advocates are regularly engaged through established governance arrangements (the NSAG). - A central thematic focus of the 1AP is '<i>supporting and empowering victims and survivors</i>' (Theme 2). Activities under this theme aim to provide services that support victims and survivors to cope with the complex, long-lasting impacts of child sexual abuse. Central to this theme is delivery of holistic and accessible support to victims and survivors, noting funding for support services is primarily a state and territory responsibility with support from the Australian Government. The 1AP specifies 11 activities under Theme 2 (5 under NAP and 6 under CAP) that involve supporting victims and survivors. Some examples of activities that fall under this theme include CAP 8 ('expand the national specialist trauma-informed legal support service') and NAP 7 ('deliver a website and helpline to assist victims and survivors to access help and information').
Children and young people's voices and views, experiences and participation are central to the decisions we make.	- The representation of young people in the 1AP's implementation is evidenced through its governance arrangements. Following a review that identified a gap in the representation of young people in the National Strategy Advisory Group's membership, the National Office recruited and welcomed two new youth members who joined in June 2024. - The National Office has also established avenues to support young people's engagement with the National Strategy. On 24 and 25 June 2024, the National Office hosted the National Child Safety Youth Summit (the Youth Summit). The event had more than 50 young people aged 18-30, including individuals with lived experience of child sexual abuse. The event aimed to understand young people's key priorities for the National Strategy's 2AP and how the government can effectively engage with young people. Feedback on the development of national guidelines or standards for understanding, preventing and responding to children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours was also sought.

	While the National Office and other implementing agencies provided opportunities for children and young people to support with co-design and implementation of 1AP activities, multiple Activity Leads noted that the level of engagement among children and young people (particularly those with lived experience) varied. Child sexual abuse remains a highly stigmatised and sensitive topic for the broader community. See Section 5.1 for further details.
We hear and value the diverse views and experiences of all Australians. The work we do to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse is: culturally safe, developmentally and age-appropriate, trauma-informed, accessible and meets diverse needs and circumstances.	- The perspectives and experiences of National Strategy priority groups have shaped the design and implementation of the 1AP. Activities have considered the needs of diverse groups, including children, young people, First Nations peoples, individuals with disabilities, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. 6 out of 8 NSAG survey respondents indicated that feedback from priority groups was listened to and considered when carrying out the 1AP (4 'agree', 2 'strongly agree', n=8). - Selected 1AP activities have a specific focus on children and young people who are more likely to be vulnerable. For example, as part of implementing NAP 1 ('implement and promote the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations'), Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) was engaged to conduct consultation with young people with disability, carers and organisations to understand how best to support the safety of children and young people with disability. - Where appropriate, National Strategy's activities have been tailored to be culturally suitable and accessible to the specific cultural needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Examples of this include: - The Australian Government launched a national awareness-raising campaign on child sexual abuse titled 'One Talk at a Time' under NAP 6 ('deliver a national awareness raising campaign on child sexual abuse'). Multiple rounds of testing were completed to ensure the campaign was effective, culturally safe and accessible. Some campaign materials were co-created with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and others were translated into various languages. Bespoke resources were created for different cultural and language groups. - The National Office engaged a First Nations Co-design partner to undertake consultations with First Nations communities to inform the design and implementation of NAP 7 ('deliver a national information and referral service for victims and survivors of child sexual abuse and others seeking help and information'). The NIAA established an Indigenous expert group to provide advice and expertise on the design and implementation of the Supporting Healing for Families, and the Believe Inquire Respond to Disclosures (BIRD). The Indigenous Expert Group members include the Healing Foundation, SNAICC – National Voice for our Children, the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) and Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia. - National Strategy documentation has also been tailored to improve accessibility for people with low English language proficiency, low literacy and for people with intellectual disability, including through the publication of resources in Easy Read format. Publicly available resources such as the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, implementation guidelines, complaint handling guidelines and conversation toolkits have been translated into different languages.
Evidence, data, research and evaluation informs	The establishment of the M&E Framework demonstrates the commitment of the 1AP and National Strategy in embedding monitoring and evaluation into all activities, programs and reforms. The M&E Framework has been designed to assess the progress

our policies, programs and reforms.	of the National Strategy’s objectives and activities. To guide data collection and ensure transparency, the M&E Framework defines measurable indicators to track progress towards achieving each outcome. Guided by the M&E Framework, Activity Leads are required to undertake individual evaluations for each activity. However, overall approaches to evaluation have been inconsistent, as explored further in Section 5.2. • Extensive research and data collection activities have also been undertaken for many individual activities where appropriate. Some prominent examples of this include NAP 6, NAP 14, and NAP 29 (see Appendices A.1, A.2, and A.3 for case studies on these activities, which include a discussion of the research and consultation activities undertaken to inform delivery).
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Source: Deloitte Access Economics review of National Officer for Child Safety documentation and stakeholder feedback

3.2 Were the strategies and activities appropriately designed to meet the intended outcomes?

Key finding 1: The 1AP aspires to address child sexual abuse through a range of activities that reflect its multifactorial nature and the diverse settings in which it occurs. The action plans were, however, perceived to be ambitious.

3.2.1 The effectiveness of the 1AP design

The appropriateness of the 1AP design is assessed against best practice principles outlined in the Australian Government Public Service Academy’s model for great policy advice (see Appendix D.1 for further details on the principles). In summary, the model advocates for the design of policy to be underpinned by four key principles – (1) clear on intention, (2) well-informed and evidence-based, (3) practical to implement and (4) provides influential advice involving engaging stakeholders with influence. When assessing the overall design of the 1AP against these principles, there is evidence that the 1AP was well-informed and evidence-based (see Section 3.1.2). However, evidence collected through this evaluation identified opportunities to improve the clarity and practicality of individual 1AP actions. More could also be done to ensure the most influential stakeholders (particularly interjurisdictional stakeholders) were continuously engaged throughout the design and implementation process. This theme is explored further in Section 5.3 – governance arrangements.

In relation to the **clarity** of designed activities, the National Strategy’s 1AP were broadly perceived to be ambitious due to the breadth of actions included in these plans. This is partly because of two factors: first, the intent was for the National Strategy to respond to the Royal Commission’s recommendations. Of the 409 recommendations, 122 were directed wholly or partially to the Australian Government. The Australian Government has accepted in principle to implement 104 recommendations.²⁴ This has contributed to the diverse range of activities included in the action plans. Second, the National Strategy’s vision and objectives focused on preventing and responding to all forms of child sexual abuse – which is broader than the Royal Commission’s focus on child sexual abuse specifically in institutional settings. The broad range of activities partly reflects the multifactorial nature of child sexual abuse and the different prevention and risk factors that would need to be considered to achieve this objective.

‘The experience of [child sexual abuse] is so varied and different – the range of perpetrators, the range of settings, the age and stage of the child, the nature of the sexual abuse. There’s so much to it, and so many actions and activities needed that you look at [the 1AP] and you think ‘OK, yes, that makes sense.’

– Child sexual abuse policy stakeholder

An unintended consequence of this aspiration is that the design of some individual activities was perceived to be too broad and had a limited sense of prioritisation. Both government and non-government stakeholders (including Activity Leads) agreed that some individual 1AP activities did not have the necessary supporting detail to clearly link activities to intended

²⁴ Australian Government (2018), Australian Government Response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse <<https://www.childsafety.gov.au/system/files/2023-11/Australian%20Government%20Response%20to%20the%20Royal%20Commission%20into%20Institutional%20Responses%20to%20Child%20Sexual%20Abuse%20-%20full%20version.PDF>>

outcomes. Referring to the national awareness campaign under NAP 6 as an example, one non-government stakeholder noted that *'it was a massive, massive scope...if you look at how it aligns with the Action Plan, the activity was vague such that the campaign still fit'*. Another example of this broad scope is CAP 4 ('prevent online harms and promote safe online practices for children and young people'), which was addressed through the delivery of the Families Capacity Building (FCB) project by eSafety. While the framing of CAP 4 in official documentation did not indicate explicit focus on specific communities, eSafety delivered targeted education for parents and carers with a particular emphasis on providing resources for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. It is acknowledged that the need for CALD resources during initial project scoping contributed to these implementation decisions.

'[The National Office] are working on 62 activities – that sounds like a lot. How do you coordinate those efforts really effectively so priorities are made in a meaningful way?' – Child sexual abuse policy stakeholder

Some stakeholders also noted that there are significant differences in the nature and type of child sexual abuse – for example, responses to intrafamilial child sexual abuse would differ from child sexual abuse perpetrated by carers at institutional settings. In recognition of these nuances, some stakeholders called for future activities to be mapped against the different types of abuse that individual activities are seeking to address.

Improvement opportunity: There are significant differences in the nature and type of child sexual abuse (e.g., intrafamilial child sexual abuse and child sexual abuse perpetrated in institutional settings). Future activities need to be scoped appropriately to acknowledge these nuances. Planned activities can ideally be more explicitly linked to specific outcomes and designed to address the unique needs and risks associated with each context.

Key finding 2: The implementation complexity of individual 1AP activities varies. More ambitious activities were developed with the intention to be delivered over the lifetime of the National Strategy (by 2030), while more operationally-designed activities were intended to be delivered within the 1AP's original timeframes (2021-24). It is noted that the Australian Government has recently invested additional funding for 1AP activities to be delivered over 2025-26.

In relation to the **practicality** of implementing activity plans, not all activities were designed in a readily implementable way. Some activities were perceived to be too broad, more operational in nature and not sufficiently linked to the National Strategy's defined outcomes. The 1AP is an ambitious document due to the range, breadth and scale of its 62 activities. Some of these activities have been designed in a readily implementable way: for example, NAP 25 ('set up a monitoring and evaluation framework under the National Strategy') clearly identified the output of the activity and contained a clear purpose of supporting monitoring and evaluation activities for the National Strategy (see Appendix B.1 for details on the M&E Framework). However, this approach was not consistently observed across all activities. Stakeholders highlighted opportunities for improvement in four key areas:

1. Clearer scope of activities

The scope clarity of individual activities overall varies. Some activities have a narrow scope, allowing them to be more clearly defined, which in turn has supported clarity in their progress and eventual completion. For example, NAP 12 ('set up a National Clinical Reference Group') is limited to establishing a consultative group focusing on children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours.

However, the broad wording of some activities has necessitated further research and scoping activities to support to impose a narrower focus to deliver implementable actions. Examples include:

- CAP 21 ('strengthen law and justice frameworks in the Indo-Pacific and South-East Asia regions'), which is open to broad interpretation as to what supporting actions would address this activity. The CAP outlines that AGD would work with agencies in the regions to provide capacity-building support, including technical and peer-to-peer assistance focused on policy reform and assistance with law reform to improve the ability to address child sexual abuse. While these high-level directions allow for significant flexibility in service delivery, the actions delivered in support of CAP 21 have been necessarily narrowed (e.g., focus on key countries and online child sexual abuse) to allow for meaningful implementation (see Appendix A.8 and Box 3.1 for a case study on CAP 21).

- Additionally, activities that involve the introduction of new services (e.g. NAP 10 – set up a national support service for non-offending family members of child sexual abuse perpetrators) required further scoping and engagement activities as the service is the first national service of its kind in Australia.

Box 3.1 Commonwealth Action Plan Activity 21 (CAP 21): strengthen law and justice frameworks in the Indo-Pacific Region

CAP 21 established the Indo-Pacific Child Protection Program (IPCPP), a ‘capacity-building program that seeks to support Indo-Pacific partners with regional policy, legislative and operational responses to combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse’.²⁵

Through the program, the National Office has delivered and facilitated a broad range of bilateral and multilateral activities to support enhancing capacity and collaboration on law and justice issues in the Indo-Pacific region. Where appropriate, the National Office worked with the Australian Federal Police (AFP), including the AFP-led Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation (ACCCE), the Department of Foreign Affairs, as well as non-government and not-for-profit organisations to deliver activities. The activities have primarily been delivered in-person in the country of focus, to support effective, tailored peer-to-peer technical assistance and to manage sensitivities regarding the activities’ content.

The figure below summarises a selection of capacity-building activities undertaken as part of CAP 21.



For more details on this case study, see 1AP Evaluation – Appendix A (Case Studies), Appendix A.8.

2. Greater specificity in implementation timeframes

Some activities have been designed to be achieved beyond the timeframe of the 1AP. It may not have been realistic for more complex activities to be delivered within the original implementation timeframes of 2021-24 (e.g., activities which involve the introduction of new services across different jurisdictions).²⁶ While this accords with the complex and multifactorial nature of addressing child sexual abuse, the 1AP does not clearly identify which activities are intended to be completed within or beyond the 1AP’s timeframes. In the absence of prescribed timeframes for individual activities, the 1AP may appear to be more ambitious for a first action plan than originally intended.

²⁵ National Office for Child Safety 2021, *First Commonwealth Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2024*, <<https://www.childsafety.gov.au/resources/first-commonwealth-action-plan-prevent-and-respond-child-sexual-abuse-2021-2024>>.

²⁶ It is noted that the Australian Government invested additional funding to implement several 1AP activities in 2025-26.

Limited specificity in implementation timeframes contributed to a lack of clarity on how to prioritise selected individual 1AP activities over others. For example, the implementation of NAP 15 ('increase workforce capability for preventing and responding to children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours') requires extensive resources, time and expertise to develop the necessary capability among large workforces across Australia's child safe sector to implement. Government stakeholders noted that some sequencing of individual activities was required for this theme – in this instance, NAP 13 ('Develop guidelines or national standards for understanding, preventing and responding to children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours') and NAP 14 ('Set up a national clinical and therapeutic framework for responding to children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours') were implemented concurrently. NAP 13 and NAP 14 were agreed to be prioritised as foundational activities ahead of the implementation of NAP 15 (increase workforce capability for preventing and responding to children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours).

Improvement opportunity: It is important to design specific and targeted activities with clearly specified implementation timeframes.

It is critical to design specific and targeted activities with clear timeframes to ensure that there is meaningful and timely progress in the implementation of child sexual abuse reforms. The design of future action plan activities should ideally adhere to SMART principles (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound).

In addition to setting clear timeframes, consideration should be given to the appropriate sequencing of activities to ensure they are implemented in a logical and coordinated order. Effective sequencing helps prevent overlaps and ensures prerequisite work is completed prior to the commencement of subsequent activities.

3. The development of agreed outcomes during the design phase

The 1AP was designed and formally launched approximately three years before the development of the National Strategy M&E Framework. As a result of these sequencing decisions, the design of 1AP activities could not be consistently linked to the medium- and long-term outcomes in the M&E Framework. This presents an opportunity for future National Strategy activities to be better aligned with the M&E Framework.

Available evidence also indicates that outcomes were not consistently specified during the design phase of activities. Some child safety policy stakeholders noted that without greater clarity and specificity on the intention of the activities, it was challenging for the National Office to hold Activity Leads accountable for how their actions acquitted their responsibility for leading activities.

Improvement opportunity: There should be clarity on the short-, medium- and long-term outcomes that activities are designed to achieve from the outset.

These outcomes should be aligned with the National Strategy's M&E framework to ensure that all activities are designed to contribute to the achievement of the National Strategy's vision and objectives, and the logic underpinning it (i.e. the link between activities and outputs and outcomes).

4. Efficiency.

This section assesses the extent to which the 1AP have been implemented in a timely, cost-effective manner with quality use of inputs.

Table 4.1: Mapping relevant sections responding to the key evaluation questions and sub-evaluation questions

Domain	Key evaluation question	Sub-evaluation question	Relevant section
Efficiency	To what extent has the 1AP been implemented in a timely, cost-effective manner with quality use of inputs?	Was the action plan coordinated and executed within the designated timeframe and budget?	4.1
		How effectively were resources (financial, human, material) utilised during implementation?	4.2
		What were the key challenges faced during implementation; and how were these challenges addressed?	4.3

4.1 Implementation within designated timeframes and budget

Key Finding 3: All activities have reported varying levels of progress. Implementation commenced later than originally envisaged for selected activities due to the need to undertake additional scoping, research and engagement activities. There was an overall underestimation in the level of resourcing required to implement activities that are more complex and large scale in nature.

This section is intended to evaluate the degree to which 1AP's activities were implemented within their intended timeframes and budgets. All assessments of timelines and budget adherence are drawn from National Office data, which was provided in July 2025, and stakeholder feedback on specific 1AP activities. There are specific data gaps that impact the robustness of analyses included in this chapter:

- Information on budget allocation on individual 1AP activities has not been included in this report due to confidentiality concerns. While the National Office provided data on Commonwealth government allocated budget for most individual 1AP activities, there is comparatively limited information on the level of actual expenditure at an Action Plan activity and National Strategy level. This impacts the evaluation's ability to assess the cost-effectiveness of implementation, as well as the degree to which implementation was within the designated budget.
- In terms of timeframes, information on the expected delivery timeframes for individual 1AP activities was not consistently provided or specified. Assessments of whether activities were implemented according to intended funding were completed for 6 out of 62 activities and were primarily based on stakeholder feedback.

The National Office categorises the implementation progress of individual 1AP activities into three key categories: 'Complete', 'Implemented', and 'In progress'. These categories are defined as:²⁷

- Complete: Activities considered complete/fully progressed with no further action or progress reporting required.
- Implemented: Activities that have been implemented whereby the development or delivery phase has now been completed and the product or service has been launched. Further action or reporting is still required.
- In progress: Activities with reported ongoing implementation progress. Within the "in progress" category, the National Office introduced three sub-categories:

²⁷ Implementation status categories are defined based on regular and annual progress reporting to the National Office by activity lead agencies. For more information on progress reporting under the National Strategy please visit <<https://www.childsafety.gov.au/what-we-do/monitoring/annual-reporting>>.

- Limited progress: The activity has commenced, but greater focus is required in the implementation of the activity, as there is limited progress.
- Some progress: The activity is overall somewhat progressed towards completion.
- Substantial progress: There is evidence that suggests this activity is well progressed towards completion.

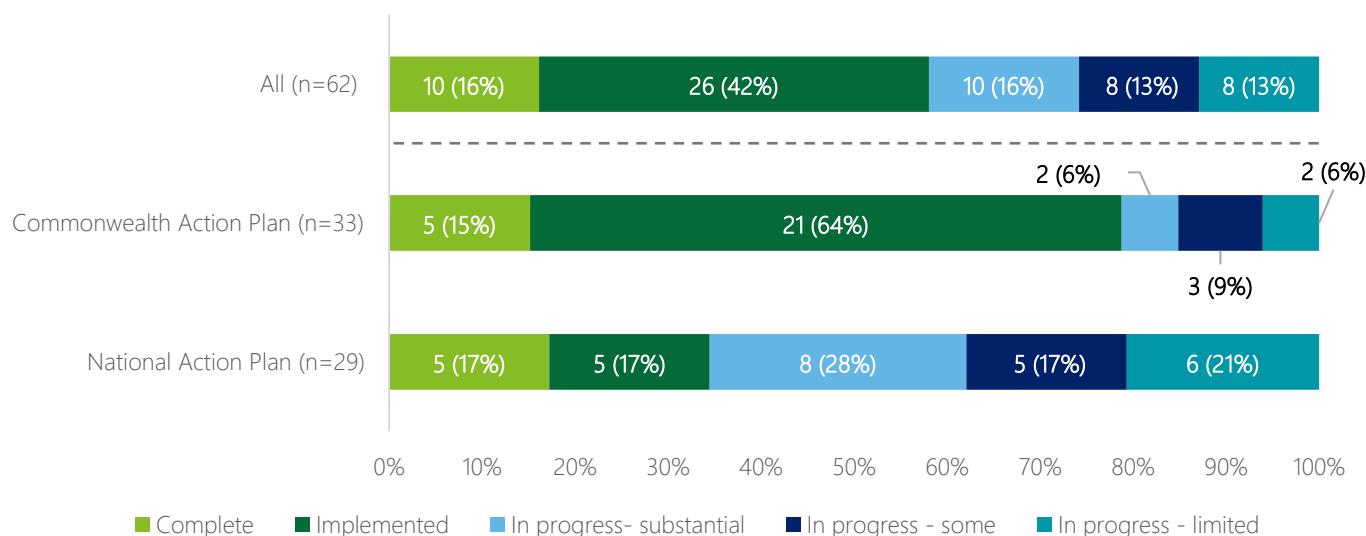
See Appendix F for a more detailed assessment of implementation progress for each 1AP activity.

As shown in Chart 4.1, 1AP activities are at varying levels of implementation progress:

- 10 out of 62 (16%) of 1AP activities have been completed. No further action is required for these activities.
- 26 out of 62 (42%) of 1AP activities have been implemented,
- Implementation is in progress for the remaining 26 out of 62 (42%) 1AP activities. According to the National Office, the magnitude of implementation progress varies by individual 1AP activities. This is evidenced by the approximately equal number of activities in the “limited”, “some” and “substantial” progress categories.

The proportion of activities that have been completed appears to be broadly consistent across all action plans. The only notable exception is the greater proportion of activities within the “in progress” category for the National Action Plan – 19 out of 29 (66%) of NAP activities are in progress compared to 7 out of 33 (21%) of CAP activities. A greater proportion of CAP activities have been assessed as “implemented” – 21 out of 33 (64%), relative to 13 out of 29 (45%) of NAP activities. The differences in implementation progress across both action plans are partly attributable to the number of activities the Australian Government leads in each plan. The CAP includes activities to be delivered solely by the Australian Government, while the NAP requires jurisdictional government involvement and/or endorsement which by nature can be more complex to implement.

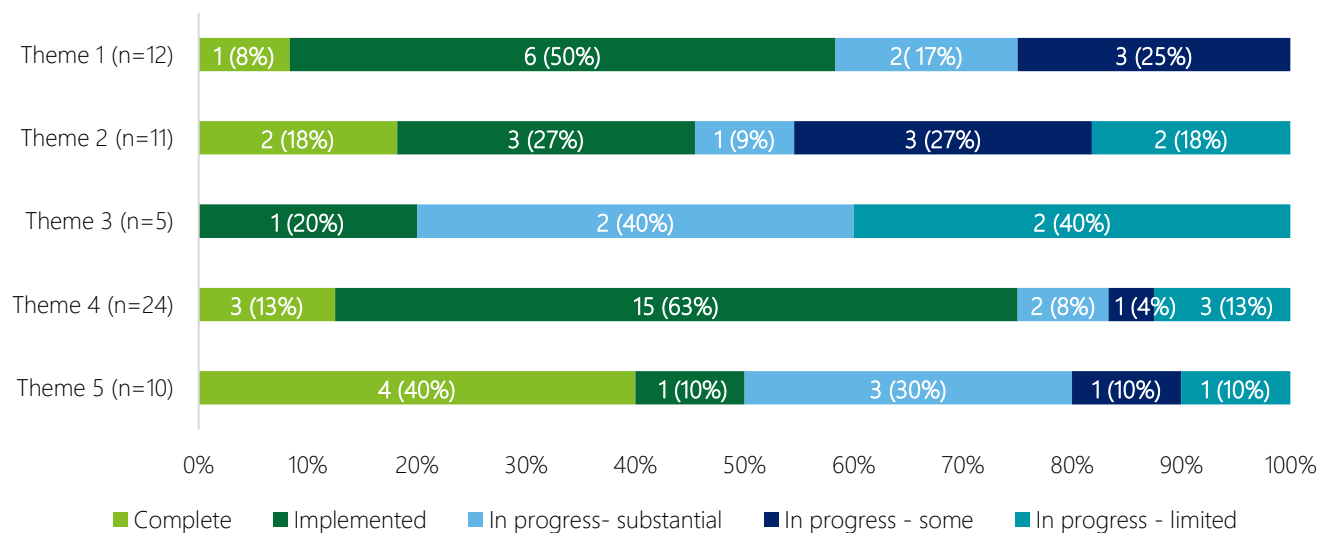
Chart 4.1: Overall implementation progress



Source: Deloitte Access Economics analysis of National Strategy implementation reporting to the National Office as of August 2025.

When assessed by Theme, a larger proportion of Theme 5 (Improving the evidence base) and Theme 2 (Supporting and empowering victims and survivors) activities were completed or implemented compared to other Themes (see Chart 4.2). 4 out of 5 (80%) of the activities under Theme 3 (enhancing national approaches) are in progress.

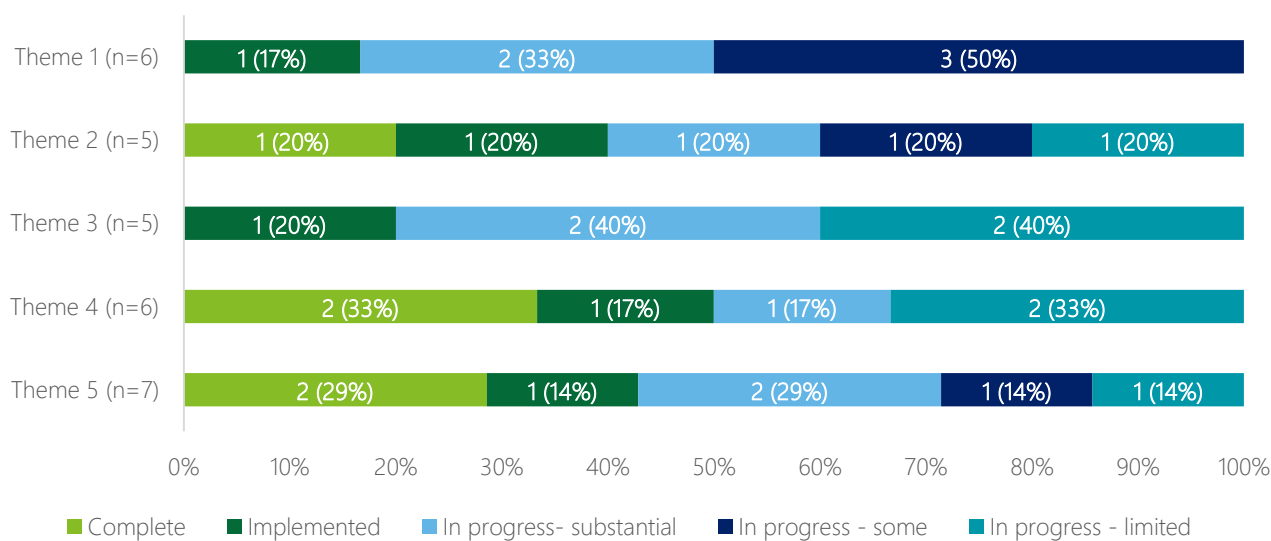
Chart 4.2: Overall implementation progress by theme



Source: Deloitte Access Economics analysis of National Strategy regular implementation reporting to the National Office as of August 2025.

Note: Theme 1: Awareness raising, education and building child safe cultures, Theme 2: Supporting and empowering victims and survivors, Theme 3: Enhancing national approaches to children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours, Theme 4: Offender prevention and intervention, and Theme 5: Improving the evidence base.

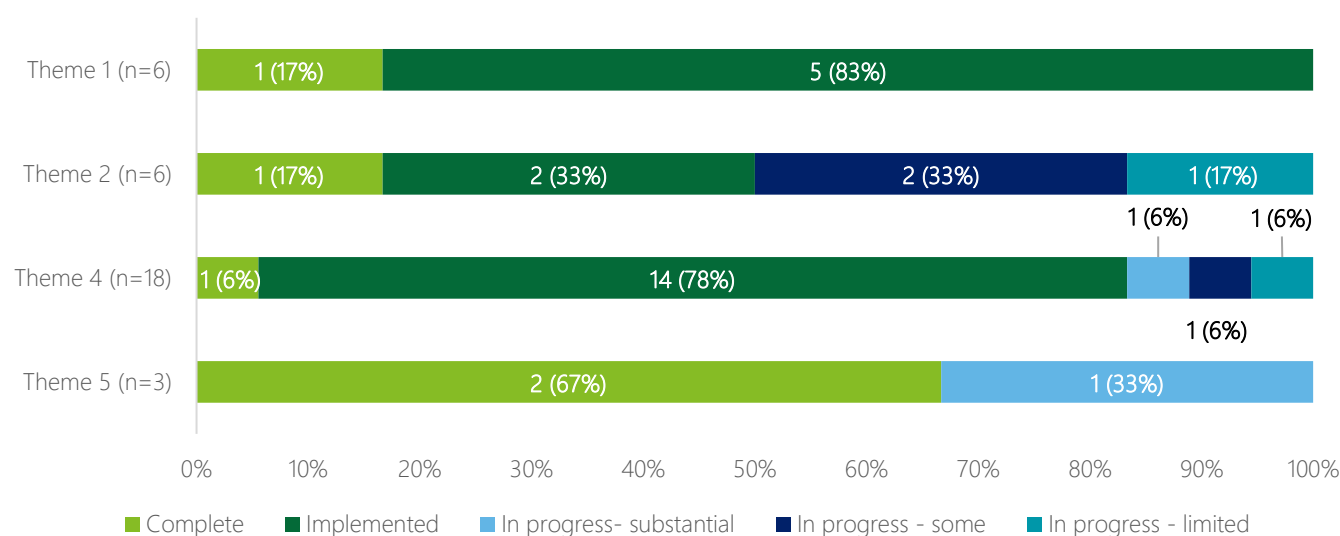
Chart 4.3: National Action Plan implementation progress by theme



Source: Deloitte Access Economics analysis of National Strategy regular implementation reporting to the National Office as of August 2025.

Note: Theme 1: Awareness raising, education and building child safe cultures, Theme 2: Supporting and empowering victims and survivors, Theme 3: Enhancing national approaches to children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours, Theme 4: Offender prevention and intervention, and Theme 5: Improving the evidence base.

Chart 4.4: Commonwealth Action Plan implementation progress by theme



Source: Deloitte Access Economics analysis of National Strategy regular implementation reporting to the National Office as of August 2025.

Note: Theme 1: Awareness raising, education and building child safe cultures, Theme 2: Supporting and empowering victims and survivors, Theme 4: Offender prevention and intervention, and Theme 5: Improving the evidence base. Theme 3 has been excluded from the chart because the Commonwealth Action Plan does not have any activities under Theme 3.

Examples of activities that have been completed include (See Appendix F for a full list of completed activities):

- CAP 6 ('raise public awareness of the important role of the digital industry in combating online harms', see Appendix A.5). The National Office successfully launched *The Shadows of the Web: Protecting our children in the digital world*, a 45-minute documentary in August 2024 (See Box 5.2 and Appendix A.5).
- NAP 11 ('share opportunities to improve child witness interviewing'). The AFP has worked with jurisdictional counterparts to improve child witness interviewing and provide information on any Commonwealth issues as part of the Child Abuse Commission Responsibilities.
- CAP 25 ('strengthen Australia's partnership with INTERPOL and the United States Homeland Security Investigations'). The AFP has partnered with Interpol to support the upgrade of the International Child Sexual Exploitation (ICSE) database.
- CAP 32 ('Complete a survey of adult offenders'). The Australian Institute of Criminology conducted the Survey of Adult Sexual Offenders to inform the design and evaluation of child sexual abuse prevention and intervention program policies. The survey was designed by individuals with subject matter expertise, police and institutions.

Examples of activities that have been implemented include:

- NAP 1 ('Implement and promote the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations'). The National Office worked with state and territory governments and non-government sectors to develop new National Principles resources to support and promote a culture of safety and wellbeing in organisations. The National Office has continued to work with states and territory governments to implement and promote the National Principles.
- CAP 9 ('Set up an online chat service to deliver free legal assistance services to children and young people experiencing or at risk of harm (including sexual abuse)'). Youth Law Australia (YLA) has been delivering a national online chat service since March 2022, which provides a secure live online chat system that provides free legal assistance to children and young people experiencing or at risk of harm, including sexual abuse.

- NAP 12 ('Set up a National Clinical Reference Group'). The NCRG was set up in April 2022 and continues to meet regularly to provide expert advice on the design, implementation and evaluation of activities related to preventing and responding to children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours.²⁸
- CAP 26 ('Improve national ability to triage online child sexual abuse reports through the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation'). The AFP has recruited and inducted four additional resources within the ACCCE Child Protection Triage unit, who have implemented new roster and inbox management systems to increase capacity during periods of high demand.

Examples of activities that are in progress and have achieved substantial progress over the duration of the 1AP include:

- NAP 5 ('Work with the National Centre to develop and deliver education and capacity-building measures'). The National Centre has delivered a range of programs, resources and training to support building workforce capability in preventing and responding to child sexual abuse.
- CAP 21 ('strengthen law and justice frameworks in the Indo-Pacific and South-East Asia regions', see Appendix A.8).
- NAP 29 ('develop a scoping study to establish an Australian Child Wellbeing Data Asset', see Appendix A.3). In July 2025, the AIHW launched a pilot version of the Australian Child Wellbeing Data Asset.

The activities which are in progress and have achieved some or limited progress over the duration of the 1AP tend to be large-scale, longer-term in nature and of higher complexity. All these activities are under the NAP, and include, for example:

- NAP 8 ('deliver a trauma-aware, healing informed and culturally appropriate resource to improve early disclosure experiences of, and access to specialist services for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims and survivors').
- NAP 15 ('increase workforce capability for preventing and responding to children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours').
- NAP 28 ('conduct a second wave of the Australian Maltreatment Study').

There is insufficient evidence to assess whether most 1AP activities have been implemented according to specified budgets. This is driven by various factors, including differences in how individual 1AP activities were funded and machinery of government changes.

All Activity Leads who responded to the survey (n=10) agreed or strongly agreed that 1AP activities were implemented within allocated budgets. This contrasts with feedback received during stakeholder interviews, which presented a more nuanced picture on actual activity implementation. About 4 Activity Leads stated that their respective activities incurred higher expenditure compared to initial budget allocations due to an underestimation of activity complexity and the financial and staffing resources required to support implementation. This is further discussed in Section 4.3. For the remaining 52 activities (85% of activities), there was limited evidence to determine whether the activity has been or will be completed within budget.

The overall lack of clarity on funding and expenditure reflects the varied, evolving nature of funding arrangements. For instance, some activities received no funding or were under-resourced, while machinery-of-government changes that shifted funding between Departments impacted some activities. Additionally, several activities were financed through residual funds from other activities. It is also important to note that while some activities, such as CAP 9 ('Set up an online chat service to deliver free legal assistance services to children and young people experiencing or at risk of harm (including sexual abuse)'), may have been implemented within their budgets, they will require ongoing funding to ensure their continued delivery.

²⁸ The NCRG will conclude in December 2025. The National Office plans to continue to seek expert advice to address children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours through consultation mechanisms for activities under the 2AP where appropriate.

4.2 Effectiveness of resource utilisation

Key finding 4: There is mixed evidence that 1AP has been implemented efficiently. While there were some instances of effective resource utilisation, efficiency of resource utilisation could be enhanced through improved collaboration across stakeholders as well as more timely and effective procurement processes.

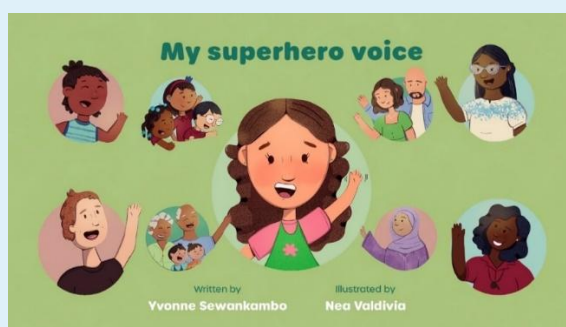
The implementation of activities under the 1AP demonstrated effective resource allocation in the following ways:

- **Funding arrangements were flexible and responsive to the implementation needs of activities.** There were several instances where Activity Leads of resource-constrained activities could access unused funding from other 1AP activities. For example, the National Office sourced additional funding from other activities to commission the Australian Centre for Child Protection to lead the development of the National Clinical and Therapeutic Framework (NAP 14).
- **Many activities leveraged providers with significant experience and expertise in completing similar work in the child protection sector.** Leveraging the experiences and expertise of external providers enabled activities to forgo additional time that would have been spent on onboarding and training staff and developing relationships with relevant stakeholders. The National Office collaborated with a range of expert groups to implement several activities. For example, the Daniel Morcombe Foundation were engaged to develop activities and resources as part of NAP 6 (Box 4.1 and Appendix A.1) and the Australian Centre for Child Protection was engaged to implement NAP 14 to develop the National Clinical and Therapeutic Framework for children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours (Box 4.2 and Appendix A.2).
- **Several 1AP activities were built on pre-existing work, reducing the time and resources required to establish and progress activities.** Some activities were able to leverage existing knowledge, expertise, and systems, which enabled implementation to progress more rapidly compared to other activities. For example, Knowmore (CAP 8) has provided nationwide, free and independent, trauma-informed and culturally safe legal advice to victims and survivors of institutional child sexual abuse since 2013. CAP 8 extended its scope to include provision of advice to victims and survivors of non-institutional child sexual abuse.

Box 4.1 National Action Plan Activity 6 (NAP 6): Deliver a national awareness-raising campaign on child sexual abuse

The National Office was tasked with delivering a national awareness-raising campaign on child sexual abuse that focused on inducing and promoting behaviour change among parents, carers and other influencers in children and young people's lives. The advertising campaign was complemented with over 40 public relations materials, which included educational tools and resources, webinars and videos. The public can access these resources on the ChildSafety.gov.au website, which were developed in partnership with various leading organisations in the child safety space, such as the Australian Childhood Foundation, the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation (ACCCE), the Daniel Morcombe Foundation and Raising Children Network.

Examples of complementary resources and educational tools include the *My superhero voice* story book, a suite of resources and activities created in collaboration with the Daniel Morcombe Foundation, and a webinar in partnership with Australian Childhood Foundation.



For more information on this case study, see 1AP Evaluation – Appendix A (Case Studies), Appendix A.1.

However, several factors hindered the efficiency of resource allocation. This included:

- **There are potential implementation efficiencies through better coordination with relevant federal and state/territory government agencies that are implementing similar reforms.** The National Office regularly engages other stakeholders who are progressing similar reforms. Despite this, there are instances of potential duplication and missed opportunities for collaboration with other agencies that are implementing similar reforms concerning child safety, child protection, and domestic family violence. Stakeholders highlighted opportunities for the design of future action plans to be better aligned with ongoing reforms, for example, with *Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children* and the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Children*, as well as state- and territory-based reforms in child safety and domestic and family violence sectors. This could minimise duplication and stakeholder fatigue as the same community representatives are often required to engage with different reform agendas. While there are potential benefits associated with improved alignment across reforms, it is acknowledged that bespoke approaches may still be necessary.

'It feels like at the National level, there is a lot of work going on in safeguarding vulnerable people. The National Strategy and National Action Plans need to consider the whole system to make sure we are not duplicating, and the system is working together. We are not operating in a vacuum; it is an ecosystem.'

– Child Safe Organisations Working Group stakeholder

- **Activities were reportedly implemented in silos, and there was a lack of coordination and communication between activities, limiting potential effectiveness and leading to duplication in work.** 1AP activities are designed to be complementary and are intended to achieve shared overarching outcomes. Several Activity Leads, however, noted that in practice, activities were often implemented in silos, which reduced opportunities for collaboration. Stakeholders also highlighted an opportunity for future activities to improve coordination and enhance the sharing of research across initiatives, thereby reducing duplication in data collection and achieving efficiency gains. For example, a NGCG stakeholder identified potential duplications during the process of developing practice standards. This example focused on two ongoing activities – (1) the National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence were engaged to build off the *Standards of Practical Manual for Services Against Sexual Violence (3rd Edition)*, refocused to services engaging with victims and survivors of child sexual abuse and (2) the Australian Centre for Child Protection was also commissioned to develop new minimum practice standards for specialist and community support services responding to child sexual abuse. While these resources are distinct and serve different purposes, cross over in consultations and concurrent development of resources led to perceived duplication of effort.. Additionally, there were also several instances where the National Office had commenced procurement activities that were already being progressed separately by the National Centre. The National Centre is not a government agency and therefore may not have access to information on activities being procured by the National Office due to probity concerns and Commonwealth Procurement Rules. Despite this challenge, there is still an opportunity for future action plans to consider activities delivered by the National Centre to minimise any instances of duplication.

4.3 Implementation challenges

Key finding 5: Resourcing constraints and gaps in expertise were the most commonly cited implementation challenges. This partly reflects that the service system is in earlier stages of reform.

The five key implementation challenges according to the Activity Leads survey was the (1) complexity of activities (70%, n=7), (2) competing priorities (70%, n=7), (3) limited capacity across the sector to engage due to their own resourcing constraints (60%, n=6), (4) staffing resourcing constraints (60%, n=6), and (5) financial resource constraints (50%, n=5). These implementation challenges are consistent with stakeholder feedback collected during consultations.

The high level of complexity of activities contributed to implementation delays. Multiple Activity leads acknowledged that many activities were complex in nature and required specific expertise that does not necessarily exist within government agencies. Complex actions such as NAP 2 ('set up an ongoing national annual reporting framework for non-government organisations to report on their progress to create and maintain child-safe cultures') and NAP 10 ('set up a national support

service for non-offending family members of child sexual abuse perpetrators'), necessarily required significant foundational work, coordination, and buy-in from interjurisdictional agencies, which contributed to implementation delays.

There were challenges arising from coordinating stakeholder consultation and sensitivity. Several Activity Leads attributed implementation delays to the practical challenges of identifying and engaging relevant stakeholder groups. Ethical considerations and a lack of readiness and capacity from certain stakeholder groups to speak on child sexual abuse meant that several activities faced difficulty in engaging priority population cohorts, especially related to victims and survivors, children and young people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. For example, in relation to CAP 7 ('develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing approaches'), it was noted that child sexual abuse is a stigmatised and highly sensitive topic among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This necessitated building partnerships with community-based organisations to support the development of the optimal service delivery model and subsequent rollout of the service to ensure sensitive and thorough consultation – see Appendix A.6). Stakeholders emphasised that future action plans should allow more time for stakeholder engagement and ensure that consultations proceed at a pace that respects the needs of the communities involved. In the case of NAP 29 ('develop a scoping study for and establish an Australian Child Wellbeing Data Asset'), the Activity Lead noted that a lack of engagement from state and territory data custodians and supporting governance structures led to delays in the soft launch of the Australian Child Wellbeing Data Asset – see Appendix A.3.

Several activities lacked a clear scope and guidance on how they were intended to be implemented. For example, the stakeholders revealed that the scope of NAP 5 ('work with the National Centre to develop and deliver education and capacity-building measures') was not clearly defined in the National Strategy because the National Centre itself was only established in 2021, which became a challenge in understanding how the activity was intended to be implemented. The lack of clarity in scope in the design of 1AP activities is further discussed in Section 3.2.1.

Several activities experienced staffing and resourcing constraints, which delayed implementation and meant that some services could not be implemented to their full scope. Staffing and financial resourcing constraints pose significant challenges to implementation and has contributed to activities not being delivered to scope, delays in implementation, and reduced quality and effectiveness of work. For some activities, the National Office did not possess the requisite procurement, policy and subject matter expertise to feasibly implement some 1AP activities. For example, the implementation of NAP 14 ('set up a national clinical framework for responding to children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours') required highly specialised knowledge of the child sexual abuse and protection sector (see Appendix A.1 and Appendix A.2).

Box 4.2 National Action Plan Activity 14 (NAP 14): Set up a national clinical framework for responding to children with who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours

As part of the National Strategy, Australian state and territory governments are working together to develop a public health framework to prevent and respond to children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours. NAP 14 specifically aims to set up a National Clinical and Therapeutic Framework for responding to children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours.

To initiate this work, the National Office sought the advice of the NCRG to define the scope and direction of the Framework, with the intention of drafting it based on their expert input and guidance. However, due to the complexity of the task and the need for broader sector engagement, the National Office commissioned the Australian Centre for Child Protection (ACCP) to lead the design and development of the Framework. This decision aimed to ensure that the final Framework would be informed by contemporary clinical expertise and grounded in a robust, evidence-based approach.

For more information on this case study, see 1AP Evaluation – Appendix A (Case Studies) Appendix A.2.

Some service capacity constraints among Activity Leads also detracted from their activities' achievement of intended outcomes, such as CAP 9 ('set up an online chat service to deliver free legal assistance services to children and young people experiencing or at risk of harm (including sexual abuse), see Appendix A.7).

Some activities were affected by limited or delayed funding. Some services that were funded by the National Strategy also reportedly could not meet demand for services due to capability and capacity constraints (e.g., capacity constraints reported

for CAP 9 ('set up an online chat service to deliver free legal assistance services to children and young people experiencing or at risk of harm (including sexual abuse)' – see Appendix A.7). Several 1AP activities did not receive additional funding and were intended to be implemented using existing resources. Additionally, the National Office noted that NAP 6 ('deliver a national awareness raising campaign on child sexual abuse') did not initially have funding allocated to employ staff to deliver the activity. The suppliers for government campaign advertising were not specialists in child sexual abuse policy, requiring the National Office to play a key role in informing communication approaches (see Appendix A.1).

Differences in service system arrangements across jurisdictions hindered progress towards establishing more national approaches towards addressing and responding to child sexual abuse. Stakeholders noted that there are notable differences in workforce capability and child safety service arrangements across jurisdictions. This created challenges in ongoing efforts to harmonise approaches across jurisdictions towards supporting children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours, as well as victims and survivors.

Improvement opportunity: An initial investment in time and resourcing is required in the early stages of activity implementation to understand community needs, assess the readiness of service system(s), engage subject matter experts and develop relationships with stakeholders.

Multiple 1AP activities experienced implementation delays due to the need to further scope activities, identify the target cohort and confirm the gaps that reforms are seeking to address. Based on recent experiences of implementing 1AP activities, it may be warranted for government agencies to invest time and resourcing to assess community and service system readiness, develop relationships with stakeholders and ensure that any planned interventions are appropriate and feasible for the service system landscape. It may also be worth considering whether activities will require ongoing funding beyond the 2AP during planning and prioritisation processes. This may be especially relevant for frontline services which require ongoing maintenance and operational funding.

5. Implementation.



Table 5.1: Mapping relevant sections responding to the key evaluation questions and sub-evaluation questions

Domain	Key evaluation question	Sub-evaluation question	Relevant section
Implementation	To what extent did the implementation of the 1AP activities reflect the National Strategy values?	How were the core values of the National Strategy integrated into the 1AP activities?	5.1
		To what extent did activity owners use evaluation artefacts (for example: theory of change, program logic, data matrix) to design and plan for evaluation?	5.2
		To what extent have the governance arrangements been effective in facilitating the implementation of activities?	5.3

5.1 Alignment of 1AP implementation to National Strategy values

Key finding 6: The implementation of most 1AP activities were informed by evidence and the diverse views of different stakeholder groups. However, it was challenging in practice to gather the views and experiences of children and young people as well as victims and survivors of child sexual abuse. More can also be done to elevate child safety as a shared responsibility among all relevant stakeholders.

The National Strategy includes five key values which are intended to guide the work undertaken to achieve its vision and objectives:

1. Child safety is everyone’s responsibility. Australian, state and territory governments, organisations, industry, communities, families, kin, carers and individuals all have a role to play.
2. The views and experiences of victims and survivors are a priority, and their needs shape our efforts.
3. Children and young people’s voices, views, experiences and participation are central to the decisions we make.
4. We hear and value the diverse views and experiences of all Australians. The work we do to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse is culturally safe, developmentally and age appropriate, trauma-informed, and accessible and meets diverse needs and circumstances.
5. Evidence, data, research and evaluation informs our policies, programs and reforms.

The diverse views and experiences of all Australians, including priority population cohorts, informed the implementation of multiple 1AP activities. This aligns with survey results where 6 out of 8 NSAG survey respondents agreed that feedback from priority groups was listened to and considered when carrying out the 1AP. Initial foundational activities such as feasibility studies, scoping studies, desktop research and initial consultation activities were also undertaken to ensure the implementation of 1AP activities was underpinned by a robust evidence base. Specific examples at an individual activity level include:

- For **NAP 2** (‘set up an ongoing national annual reporting framework for non-government organisations to report on their progress to create and maintain child safe cultures’), the National Office completed a two-stage consultation process to gain feedback on a proposed annual reporting model. Respondents included organisations operating in the child protection, childcare, education, out-of-home care, health, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCO), not-for-profit, religious, community services, disability advocacy, child rights advocacy and child sexual abuse prevention sectors.²⁹

²⁹ National Office for Child Safety (2025), Child Safety Annual Reporting Framework: Consulting paper.

- For **NAP 24** ('Complete a baseline analysis of specialist and community support services for victims and survivors of child sexual abuse') the development of resources to support implementation of the Minimum Practice Standards³⁰ involved extensive stakeholder engagement with peak and advocacy bodies, practice and sector experts and service providers. Three Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations were also consulted on the resources.
- For **NAP 6** ('deliver a national awareness raising campaign on child sexual abuse'), exploratory research and stakeholder engagement were conducted to understand the Australian community's knowledge, understanding and attitudes about child sexual abuse to inform the development and direction of the campaign. This included interviews with culturally and linguistically diverse people, First Nations people, experts and those with lived experience (see Box 4.1 and Appendix A.1).
- For **CAP 4** ('prevent online harms and promote safe online practices for children and young people'), the eSafety Commissioner conducted 16 peer group discussions with parents from migrant and refugee backgrounds to better understand their beliefs and experiences in relation to online safety, experiences of eSafety and preferred information channels (see Box 5.2 and Appendix A.4).
- For **CAP 6** ('raise public awareness of the important role of the digital industry in combatting online harms'), the development of the documentary involved interviews with families of victims and survivors as well as advocacy groups (see Box 5.3 and Appendix A.5).

Box 5.2 Commonwealth Action Plan Activity 4 (CAP 4): Prevent online harms and promote safe online practices for children and young people

CAP 4 was designed to address two Royal Commission recommendations: 6.2, which called for online safety education for children, parents and community members; and 6.20, which recommended that the eSafety Commissioner oversee the delivery of national online safety education aimed at parents and community members.

The implementation of CAP 4 was preceded by research activities to develop the necessary evidence base on which to develop its resources for parents and families. The activities had a particular focus on supporting CALD communities, as there are a range of diverse social influences on parenting that need to be considered in developing resources to support them.

As part of addressing this, eSafety engaged *Whereto Research* to conduct a total of 16 peer group discussions and 2 surveys with parents born overseas. Its final report was released in February 2023 and found that while many of the challenges raised by overseas-born parents were common with Australian-born parents, there were also diverse acculturation factors such as different cultures, languages and parenting approaches that introduce community-specific dynamics and challenges to supporting their children's online safety.

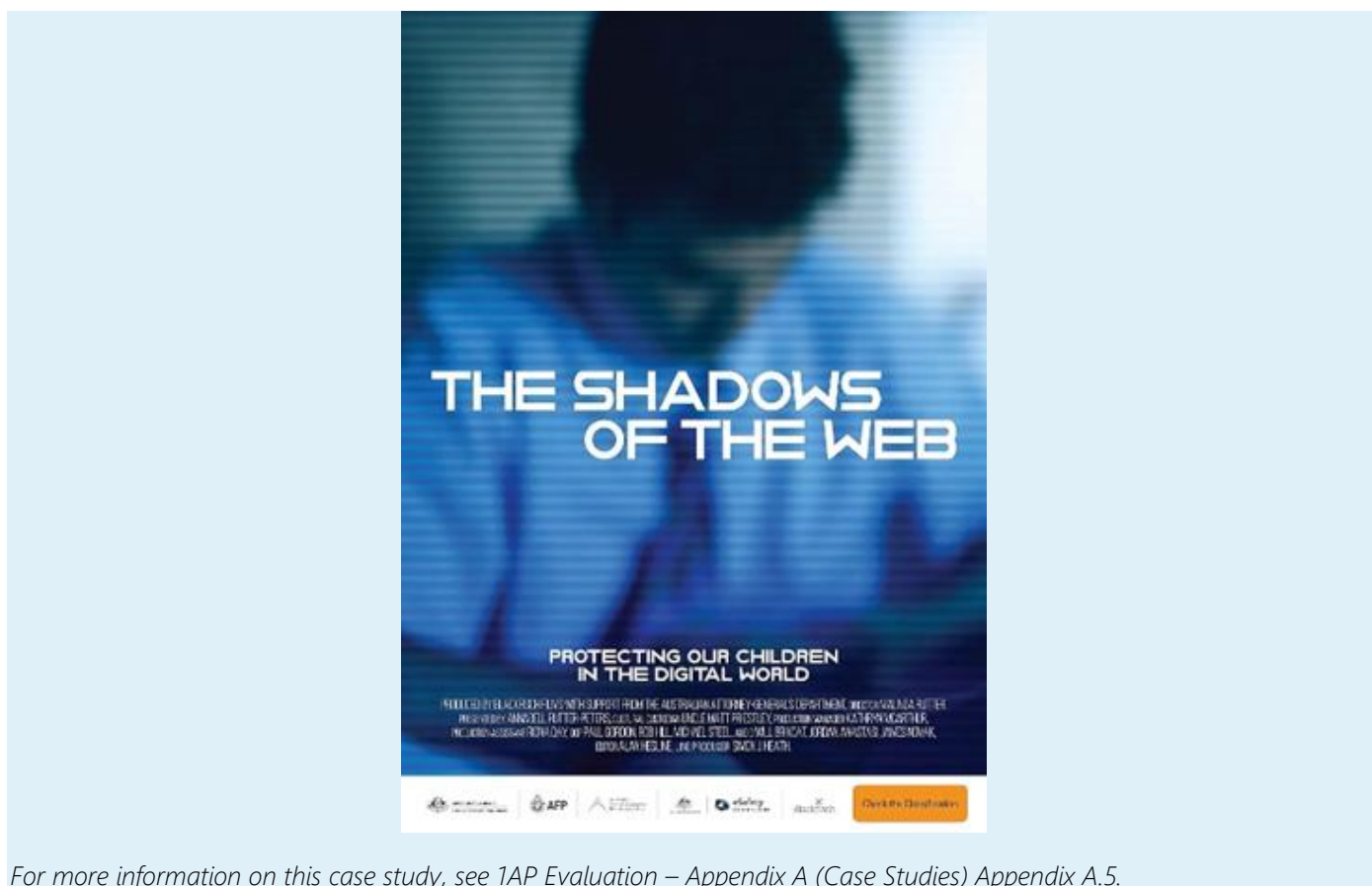
For more information on this case study, see IAP Evaluation – Appendix A (Case Studies) Appendix A.4.

Box 5.3 Commonwealth Action Plan Activity 6 (CAP 6): Raise public awareness of the important role of the digital industry in combatting online harms

CAP 6 was designed to raise public awareness of the digital industry's role in addressing criminal activity on their platforms. The National Office partnered with *Blackfish* to deliver the documentary 'The Shadows of the Web: Protecting Our Child in the Digital World' (the *Shadows of the Web*) to implement this activity.

The documentary also sought to raise awareness of the profound, long-term impacts that online child sexual abuse can have across all aspects of a person's life. To do this it included the voices of victims and survivors, their families and advocates. The documentary prominently featured interviews with parents of victims of child sexual abuse initially perpetrated online. These parents shared their experiences of the abuse itself, how it informed their subsequent work to address this crime type, and the need for stronger action from digital industry to support law enforcement efforts.

³⁰ Nous (2025), Minimum Practice Standards resources project, consultation summary



For more information on this case study, see 1AP Evaluation – Appendix A (Case Studies) Appendix A.5.

There was comparatively less evidence that all relevant government and non-government stakeholders had a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in supporting the implementation of 1AP activities. Governance groups were the key mechanisms to ensure all relevant stakeholders were provided with the opportunities to influence the implementation of 1AP activities. However, in practice, the degree to which the inputs of governance group members informed 1AP implementation varied due to the format and nature of governance group meetings (see Section 5.2). During consultations, non-government stakeholders identified scope for workforces who regularly interact with children/young people across education and health sectors (e.g., teachers, early childhood educators and healthcare professionals) to have improved understanding of their roles in supporting child safety. It is acknowledged that specific 1AP activities (e.g., NAP 1 ('Implement and promote the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations'), NAP 2 ('Set up an ongoing national annual reporting framework for non-government organisations to report on their progress to create and maintain child safe cultures') and NAP 27 ('Develop an evaluation framework on the implementation and effectiveness of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations') will help multiple organisations across different sectors to implement good practice child safety policies and processes to embed cultures that prioritise the best interest of all children.

The level of engagement among vulnerable population cohorts, such as victims and survivors and children and young people, were also variable across individual 1AP activities. Child sexual abuse remains a highly stigmatised and sensitive topic for the broader community. Multiple Activity Leads noted that opportunities were provided for those with lived experience of child sexual abuse to support the co-design and implementation of 1AP activities, although the majority of these engagements involved young people instead of children. For example, the National Office organized a National Child Safety Youth Summit in June 2024, which brought together 60 young people with lived experience of child sexual abuse, as well as advocates and other invited attendees to engage on topics, issues and activities under the National Strategy.³¹

³¹ National Office for Child Safety. (2024, June 24–25). *National Child Safety Youth Summit* [Web page]. Australian Government. Retrieved September 2, 2025, from <<https://www.childsafety.gov.au/what-we-do/engage-stakeholder-and-advisory-groups/national-child-safety-youth-summit>>

However, the level of actual engagement with children varied across individual 1AP activities due to a range of personal, emotional, social and systematic factors, most of which are beyond the control of Activity Leads. These include wellbeing concerns, consultation fatigue, lack of trust in institutions, as well as the shame and social stigma associated with child sexual abuse. Activity Leads also noted that the time, cost and expertise required to effectively engage children and young people, as well as victims and survivors, were also barriers to engagement. This is particularly true for engagements with children due to the ethical considerations associated with engaging this cohort on a sensitive topic (which often require approval from a Human Research Ethics Committee to undertake). However, the recent increase in public discourse, development of child-friendly resources and increased media coverage may contribute to gradual improvements in community awareness and readiness to share perspectives on child sexual abuse.

Additionally, some stakeholders called for more effective mechanisms (beyond governance group representations) to ensure the perspectives of victims and survivors consistently inform the ongoing implementation of individual 1AP activities. This could be achieved through the development of engagement mechanisms that are safe, supportive, anonymous and trauma-informed. This would account for the possibility that some victim survivors of child sexual abuse may only be ready to openly discuss and engage in policy discourse about this issue years after their lived experiences (if at all).

5.2 Evaluation approaches

Key finding 7: Monitoring and evaluation of 1AP activities is highly varied and contingent upon the nature of the action, the implementation stage of activities and the prioritisation of evaluation activities. There is scope to align evaluation activities to the overarching National Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

Evaluation and monitoring of outcomes achieved through the implementation of the National Strategy is a key priority for the National Office. This is evidenced through the development of the M&E Framework to embed monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programs.³² The M&E Framework includes a range of artefacts and guidance, such as:

- medium-term and long-term outcomes across all five National Strategy themes
- headline indicators and measures to assess progress in achieving the National Strategy's overarching objectives to reduce the risk, extent and impact of child sexual abuse and related issues
- theory of change, which is specific to individual National Strategy themes
- principles for monitoring and evaluation to be used by activity owners and independent evaluators.

At this stage of the 1AP's implementation, only a proportion of 1AP activities have been designed and implemented monitoring and evaluation activities to support monitoring of the implementation and impact of its activities. This is due to several factors:

1. The M&E Framework was established four years after the launch of the 1AP, which meant that it was not possible to align activity outcomes to an overarching system-level M&E Framework.
2. Some 1AP activities are activity-based and, as such, may not require an evaluation. Examples include NAP 25 ('set up a monitoring and evaluation framework under the National Strategy') and CAP 1 ('support strategic communication of the National Strategy and its outcomes').
3. The scope, nature and scale of some activities were not confirmed, which impacted the ability to establish evaluation artefacts (e.g., a program logic model) to support monitoring and evaluation. For example, the Australian Child Wellbeing Data Asset (NAP 29) will only be operational later this year.
4. Evaluation is either perceived not to be required or is not prioritised due to a general lack of resourcing in this area. Some government stakeholders acknowledged that the lack of emphasis on monitoring and evaluation at an individual activity level is a gap that should be addressed in subsequent action plans.

Among Activity Leads who have commenced evaluation, there appears to be some variation in monitoring and evaluation approaches. The four most common approaches include:

³² Commonwealth of Australia, Attorney-General's Department, National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse (2021–2030): Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (2024).

1. **Internally developed activity-specific evaluation plans** were developed midway through implementation for CAP 2 ('implement and promote the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework') and NAP 2 ('set up an ongoing national annual reporting framework for non-government organisations to report on their progress to create and maintain child safe cultures'). Evaluation artefacts were also established for NAP 12 ('set up a National Clinical Reference Group'), including a program logic, a mid-term review and an end-of-term review.
2. **Procurement of external suppliers to assess effectiveness.** This approach is generally adopted for activities that were in more advanced stages of implementation such as CAP 4 ('prevent online harms and promote safe online practices for children and young people'), NAP 6 ('deliver a national awareness raising campaign on child sexual abuse') and CAP 9 ('set up an online chat service to deliver free legal assistance services to children and young people experiencing or at risk of harm (including sexual abuse)').
3. **Procurement of external suppliers to support monitoring, evaluation and learning processes during the design stage.** This applies to CAP 7 ('develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing approaches'). The NIAA stated that an external supplier was commissioned to design a theory of change, program logic model and M&E framework for this activity before the rollout of healing services across different locations. The National Office has also engaged an external supplier to develop an evaluation framework for assessing the implementation and effectiveness of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (NAP 27). This approach was also adopted for NAP 7 ('deliver a website and helpline to assist victims and survivors to access help and information'), with an external evaluation and performance management adviser engaged during the procurement process to support with the development of performance, reporting and evaluation requirements for the NAP 7 service.
4. **Recruitment of internal staffing resources with performance management and data expertise.**

Available evidence indicates that the National Strategy's M&E Framework evaluation artefacts (e.g., program logic model, theory of change, data matrix) are not consistently adopted to inform evaluation planning and monitoring at the individual 1AP activity level. This may be partly because the M&E Framework was only established in the final year of the 1AP's original implementation timeframes (2024). Stakeholders reflected that current evaluation approaches of future National Strategy activities could be improved through:

- efforts to ensure the developed indicators and measures to assess impact and effectiveness are appropriate for different priority groups
- embedding Aboriginal data sovereignty considerations in data collection and reporting mechanisms
- addressing identified data gaps in the National Strategy M&E Framework to ensure future action plans can be more robustly evaluated
- prioritisation of evaluation activities during the design stage to enable earlier establishment of data collection mechanisms
- greater alignment between the program logic models developed by external suppliers and the overarching M&E Framework for the National Strategy (although it is acknowledged that some of these evaluations may have occurred before the M&E Framework was released).

Improvement opportunity: More data should be collected to enable more robust assessments on the impact of government investment in child sexual abuse reforms.

Monitoring and evaluation supported by robust data collection are essential to assess the implementation progress and impact of the National Strategy. It is important for all activities to align monitoring and evaluation approaches to this overarching framework to assist with overall assessments on the collective impact of reforms.

Evaluations require collection of reliable and disaggregated data to allow policymakers and service providers to identify trends, assess the reach and impact of prevention and response efforts, and adapt strategies to emerging needs.

5.3 Governance arrangements

Key Finding 8: Both government and non-government governance groups can play a more pivotal role to ensure accountability in implementation and that activities contribute to the achievement of outcomes. Improving the representation of priority groups and more opportunities for two-way information sharing would be beneficial to ensure the National Strategy is adaptive to contemporary evidence.

5.3.1 Contextual information on governance arrangements

The National Office established structured governance arrangements (see Figure 5.1). These governance arrangements provide a mechanism for Australian, state and territory governments and non-government representatives to support the implementation of the National Strategy. Terms of reference documentation were developed for all governance groups. These documents included information on the purpose, scope of work, confidentiality obligations, meeting format and reporting arrangements for individual governance groups. The key senior government groups include:

- National Strategy Policy Working Group (NSPWG) – an interdepartmental body including Commonwealth department and agencies which is accountable for the overall delivery of the first and subsequent action plans under the National Strategy.
- Senior Oversight Group (SOG) – an interjurisdictional body which is accountable for the overall delivery of the first and subsequent National Action Plans.
- Strategic Management Group (SMG) – an interjurisdictional body which oversees the implementation of the First National Action Plan and subsequent National Action Plans. Matters are escalated to the SOG as appropriate.

The senior government groups are supported by officer level working groups focused on specific areas of the National Strategy:

- the Adult Prevention and Secondary Victim Response Working Group (APSVRWG)³³, which is responsible for contributing to the development and implementation of 2 national services – an offender prevention service for adults who have sexual thoughts about children and young people and a support service for non-offending family members of child sexual abuse perpetrators
- the Child Safe Organisations Working Group (CSOWG)³⁴, which is responsible for facilitating a collaborative and non-duplicative approach to child safety in organisations across Australia
- the Children and young people who have displayed Harmful Sexual Behaviours Prevention and Response Working Group³⁵ which provides a national forum for coordination and implementation of the National Strategy activities under Theme 3 ('Enhancing national approaches to children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours')
- the Research, Evaluation and Data Working Group (REDWG)³⁶ which is responsible for contributing to the development and implementation of the 7 data, research and evaluation measures under the National Strategy's 1AP
- the Education and Awareness Raising Working Group (EARWG) which is responsible for contributing to the development and implementation of three activities to educate and raise awareness about child sexual abuse under the National Strategy's first NAP within the awareness raising and education theme.
- the Information Sharing Working Group (ISWG)³⁷ which enables all Australian governments to work together to enhance national arrangements for sharing child safety and wellbeing information
- the Law Enforcement National Strategy Working Group³⁸ which contributes to the development and delivery of the 5 AFP-led measures under the AFP
- the Victim Support and Workforce Development Working Group (VSWDWG) which is responsible for contributing to the development and implementation of 5 measures³⁹ to support and empower victims and survivors of child sexual abuse under the National Strategy's 1AP.

³³ APSVRWG oversees and supports the progress of NAP 10 and NAP 21.

³⁴ CSOWG works collaboratively to support NAP 1 and NAP 2.

³⁵ The Children and young people who have displayed Harmful Sexual Behaviours Prevention and Response Working Group is responsible for all measures under Priority Theme 3 of the NAP. This includes NAP 12, NAP 13, NAP 14, NAP 15 and NAP 16.

³⁶ REDWG is responsible for overseeing and supporting the progression of all 7 research, data and evaluation activities contained under Priority Theme 5 of the NAP. This includes: NAP 23, NAP 24, NAP 25, NAP 26, NAP 27, NAP 28, and NAP 29.

³⁷ ISWG is responsible for overseeing and progressing NAP 3.

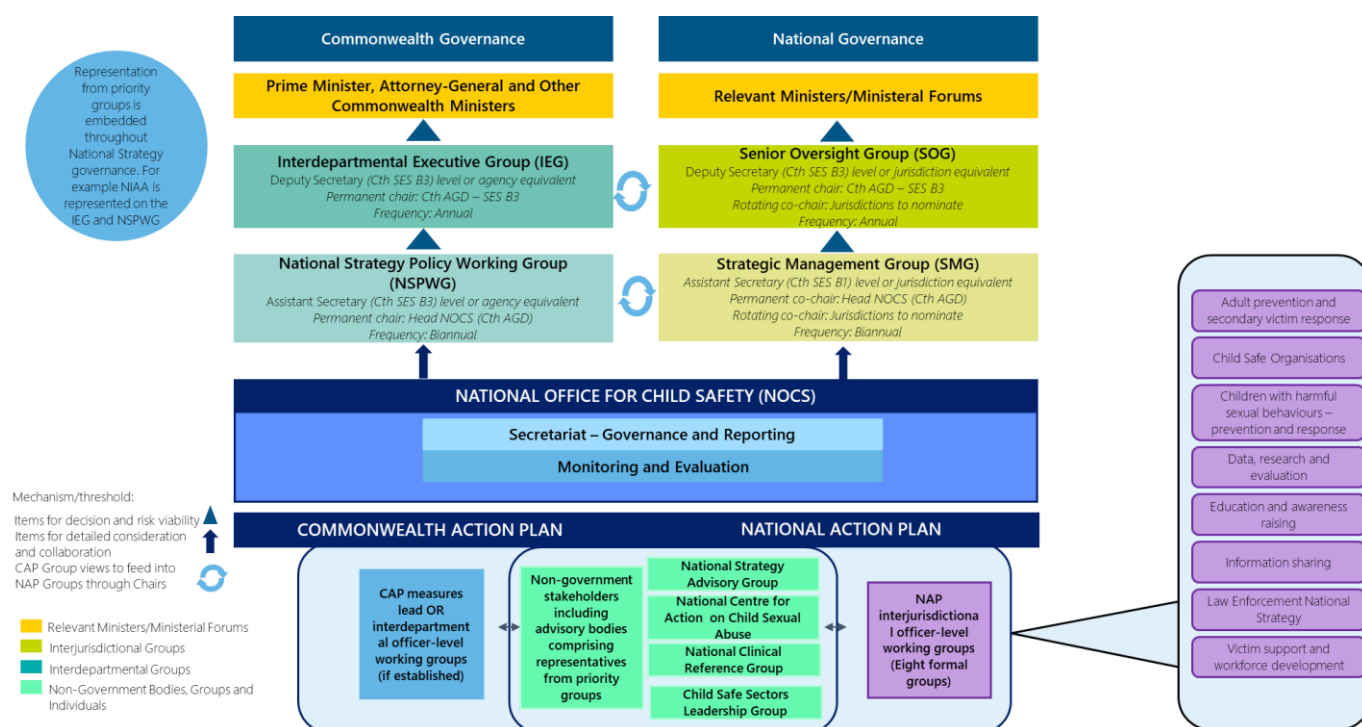
³⁸ The Law Enforcement National Strategy Working Group contributes to the development and delivery of the following activities: NAP 11, NAP 17, NAP 18, NAP 19 and NAP 20.

³⁹ VSWDWG oversees and supports the progress of the following NAP activities: NAP 7, NAP 8, NAP 9, NAP 22, and NAP 24.

The key non-government advisory groups include membership from the National Strategy's priority groups. There are three key advisory groups:

- The National Strategy Advisory Group (NSAG) – provides regular expert advice and input on the implementation of the National Strategy and its action plans.
- The National Clinical Reference Group (NCRG)⁴⁰ – provides expert advice on the design, implementation and evaluation of activities related to children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours.
- The Child Safe Sectors Leadership Group (CSSLG) – provides advice and shares information about what governments and organisations can do to keep children and young people safe and well. Members include representatives of national peak bodies and large national organisations that work with children and young people.

Figure 5.1: National Strategy Governance



Source: The National Office for Child Safety – National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030 Second Annual report 2024

Several contextual factors should be considered when assessing the effectiveness of governance arrangements in place:

- Some governance groups have a **specific remit and responsibilities** that are distinct from other governance groups. This may influence the members' level of awareness and knowledge of the 1AP more broadly. For example, in addition to advisory roles, the NCRG also has specific responsibilities in providing evidence-based advice to support the implementation of four key activities under Theme 3 of the National Strategy. Some officer-level working groups are also responsible for supporting the implementation of specific NAP activities.
- For **interjurisdictional governance groups** (SOG and SMG), each jurisdiction will decide the most appropriate representative as their member for these governance groups. This representative is expected to coordinate inputs from other state/territory government departments and agree to actions on the jurisdiction's behalf.
- The **frequency of meetings** varies by group. Some interjurisdictional governance groups meet once or twice a year (e.g. SOG, SMG) while other groups participate in quarterly meetings (e.g. NCRG, NSAG). However, it is noted that some matters can be actioned out of session.

⁴⁰ The NCRG provides expert evidence-based advice to the following activities under Theme 3 of the National Strategy: NAP 13, NAP 14, NAP 15, and NAP 16.

- Members of selected non-government advisory groups, such as NCRG and NSAG, receive **remuneration** for their engagement in official Advisory Group business, such as formal meetings. This contrasts with government working groups, where no remuneration is provided, as they are required to participate in their professional capacity as officers within their state/territory government departments.

5.3.2 Assessment on the effectiveness of governance arrangements

Overall, there were mixed views on the effectiveness of governance arrangements. Based on survey responses, the SGG were more likely to be satisfied with the effectiveness of current arrangements compared to NGCG members and Activity Leads. 3 out of 6 SGG members agreed or strongly agreed that the governance structure of the 1AP supported efficient decision-making. By contrast, 8 out of 10 Activity Leads and 17 out of 23 NGCG members who responded to the survey disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

Stakeholders commended the membership of governance groups, particularly due to the inclusion of victims and survivors in these groups. The diversity of membership across individual governance groups has allowed for the sharing of diverse perspectives on key issues.

'[The governance group] is the best example of a mixed group of lived experience, policy people and service delivery people'

– Non-Government governance group member

Stakeholder consultations indicated a number of key issues which have impacted the effectiveness of established governance arrangements. These include:

- **Opportunities for more two-way information sharing.** Some stakeholders suggested meetings to facilitate two-way information sharing from advisory group members who have significant expertise and are representatives from multiple sectors (particularly for non-government advisory groups such as the CSSLG and NCRG). Non-government governance group members appreciate the information they receive through these meetings but noted that the current meeting format does not allocate sufficient time for members to share their expertise and feedback on key issues.
- **Limited accountability mechanisms.** While jurisdictional representation is embedded in the 1AP's governance model, there are limited accountability mechanisms for state and territory governments' activities. Stakeholders familiar with the design of the 1AP noted that Australia's federated structure imposes challenges in harmonising national approaches to important activities such as support service provision to victims and survivors. It is acknowledged that it is challenging to balance between harmonising national approaches while also providing flexibility for state/territory governments to implement local approaches suited to their particular context and needs. These challenges may be addressed through governance mechanisms such as a national partnership agreement between the Commonwealth and the states and territories, which could compel all jurisdictions to report their progress on implementing activities in support of the 1AP and National Strategy.
- **Scope to improve representation of specific priority population group.** Some NGCG members reflected that there was a gap in representation from First Nations communities, children and young people and people with disability. The inclusion of three additional First Nations members to the NCRG in March 2024 was commended by multiple stakeholders, although it is noted that the NCRG held its first meeting without any First Nations representatives. Stakeholder noted that other priority groups – such as people from CALD backgrounds, representing LGBTQIA+ communities and people with disability – may require structured efforts to ensure there are opportunities for meaningful participation (e.g. holding specific governance meetings with people from CALD backgrounds for activities that specifically target CALD communities).
- **The perception that NGCGs could play a larger role in the decision-making and planning of the overall 1AP.** While the 1AP's activities are government-led, there were mixed views on the extent to which NGCGs can influence the design of activities included within the 1AP. Some NGCG members noted that they had limited visibility of the rationale underpinning these decisions, although this may be driven by the defined Terms of Reference for each NGCG.

SGG survey respondents indicated that stronger collaboration between government and non-government stakeholders and clearer accountability mechanisms to improve the delivery and uptake of future action plans is required. This was consistent with feedback from Activity Leads, who most frequently requested stronger cross-government collaboration and more transparent reporting to improve the effectiveness of governance arrangements. There is also scope for both government and non-government groups to play a more central role in ensuring accountability of implementation and achievement of outcomes. This is particularly relevant given that some NGCG members include representatives of priority population cohorts such as victims and survivors. To enable this, there should be greater clarity on the roles and responsibilities of governance group members.

'[The National Office] has to rely on the goodwill of the states and territories. There should be accountabilities across the federation to ensure these things get done.'

– Government stakeholder

'Part of the difficulty was that in states/territories, there are so many different people who are responsible for the activity. There is no direct minister or coordinating function. [In contrast], for small jurisdictions, [policy officers] are responsible for 10 different activities. They are conversely overwhelmed because they sit on all relevant governance groups.'

– Government stakeholder

6. Effectiveness.

Table 6.1: Mapping relevant sections responding to the key evaluation questions and sub-evaluation questions

Domain	Key evaluation question	Sub-evaluation question	Relevant section
Effectiveness	To what extent do victims and survivors and members of other priority groups feel engaged in the Action Plan implementation, evaluation and reporting?	To what extent were victims, survivors, and other priority groups involved in the planning and execution of the Action Plan?	6.1.1
		To what extent has feedback from victims, survivors and other priority groups been addressed in the implementation, evaluation, and reporting of the Action Plan?	6.1.2
	To what extent have key outputs from activities achieved short-term outcomes (developed by National Strategy Activity Leads). How has this contributed to medium- and long-term outcomes? Have there been any unintended consequences?	What measurable short-term outcomes have been achieved as a result of the 1AP activities?	0
		To what extent have these short-term outcomes contributed to the expected medium- and long-term outcomes?	6.3

6.1 Engagement of priority population cohorts

Key finding 9: Most 1AP activities established structured mechanisms to engage with priority groups such as First Nations communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and children and young people. However, the depth and consistency of engagement varied as many stakeholders faced barriers to discussing child sexual abuse.

6.1.1 To what extent were victims, survivors, and other priority groups involved in the planning and execution of the Action Plan?

There is evidence that most Activity Leads – including the National Office and other government agencies – have taken critical steps to engage victims, survivors and other priority groups in the planning and execution of the 1AP. The National Office's efforts to include these groups were initially demonstrated through its embedment of priority group representatives into National Strategy governance arrangements, and to specifically include them in the NSAG's membership. There have also been extensive measures taken at an activity level to incorporate representation from priority groups through the planning and execution of the 1AP.

Government and non-government stakeholders noted that there were many complex challenges associated with effectively engaging with priority group representatives. This may partly explain NGCG survey respondents' diverging views regarding stakeholder representation: 10 out of 23 of all NGCG survey respondents indicated that some key stakeholders or groups were underrepresented in their advisory group (5 out of 23 indicated there was no underrepresentation, and 8 out of 23 indicated that they were unsure). While there was no clear consensus, survey responses and consultation data suggested that LGBTQIA+ people, people with disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were perceived to be underrepresented in advisory groups and/or the 1AP.

Government stakeholders observed that many victims and survivors of child sexual abuse did not wish to engage with the 1AP because of the risk of retraumatisation associated with discussing their experiences.

In relation to priority population cohorts' involvement in governance groups, there was notably no Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives in the NCRG during its first meeting. In response, there was a concerted effort from the National Office to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in this group. The National Office noted that it took time to identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates with the specific clinical, academic or policy expertise required to participate in the NCRG. Furthermore, stakeholders noted that additional time was required to identify candidates who were available to contribute to the NCRG as their perspectives were in high demand across the sector. This issue was largely resolved as of December 2024, with the NCRG being expanded to include 3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives.

6.1.1.1 Planning

The Royal Commission's extensive engagement with priority groups, combined with its findings and recommendations, significantly informed planning activities for the 1AP (see Section 1.2.1). Some additional efforts have been made to incorporate the priority groups' perspective into the 1AP's planning activities. 4 out of 8 NSAG survey respondents indicated that priority groups were actively consulted during the planning of the First Action Plans (2 'agree', 2 'strongly agree', n=8). 4 out of 8 respondents indicated that priority groups had a meaningful input in decision-making processes (2 'agree', 2 'strongly agree', n=8).

One prominent example of involving priority groups in planning activities is the Youth Summit (delivered in support of NAP 13 and NAP 16), hosted by the National Office in June 2024. Held over two days, the Youth Summit involved more than 50 young people (aged 18-30), including individuals with lived experience of child sexual abuse, advocates and other attendees from all states and territories. Its key aim was to hear from attendees about issues and topics under the National Strategy, including their priorities for the 2AP. The Youth Summit also provided an opportunity for attendees to build their advocacy networks with other young people and advocates.

'The Youth Summit allowed for our voices to be heard, for community and collective advocacy to be nurtured and for shared storytelling and connection to occur. Such a connection is indescribable...'

– Attendee of the National Child Safety Youth Summit

Another relevant example in this area is the Supporting Quality Engagement with Children (SQE) consultation project⁴¹. The SQE project aims to include the voices of children, young people and their families in policies and services that directly affect them. Under this project, the National Children's Commissioner conducted consultations across five key national strategies and frameworks, including the National Strategy. The first year of consultations (2023) focused specifically on this National Strategy. Consultation activities were developed to gather children and young people's feedback on NAP 7 ('Deliver a website and helpline to assist victims and survivors to access help and information') and NAP 10 ('Set up a national support service for non-offending family members of child sexual abuse perpetrators'). These consultations were undertaken in urban, regional, and remote locations across all Australian states and territories and have contributed to the evidence base informing the design and implementation of a national point of referral.

6.1.1.2 Execution

These sentiments were further reflected in the Second Annual Report, which reflected on the NSAG's pride in supporting the development of media guides for responsible reporting on child sexual abuse to support Themes 1 ('Awareness raising, education and building child safe cultures') and 2 ('Supporting and empowering victims and survivors'). It also commended the work undertaken to deliver NAP 6, NAP 25 and CAP 4, suggesting the NSAG felt engaged with the delivery of these activities.

⁴¹ Australian Human Rights Commission. *Supporting Quality Engagement with Children* [Web page]. Retrieved September 2, 2025, from <<https://www.childsafety.gov.au/what-we-do/engage-stakeholder-and-advisory-groups/national-child-safety-youth-summit>>

'The National Office and the Advisory Group have already achieved an enormous amount. While it is hard to pick a favourite, I think the 'One Talk at a Time' national media campaign is probably the most moving and high impact campaign I have ever seen. There was not a dry eye in the room when we saw our input meld with the producers' artistic expertise materialising into a brilliant and powerful work of art.'

– Non-government stakeholder

There have also been examples of priority groups being involved in the execution of individual 1AP activities.

One such example is CAP 6 ('Raise public awareness of the important role of the digital industry in combatting online harms'), where parents of victims of child sexual abuse were interviewed during the production of a documentary about the role of the digital industry in combating child sexual abuse online.

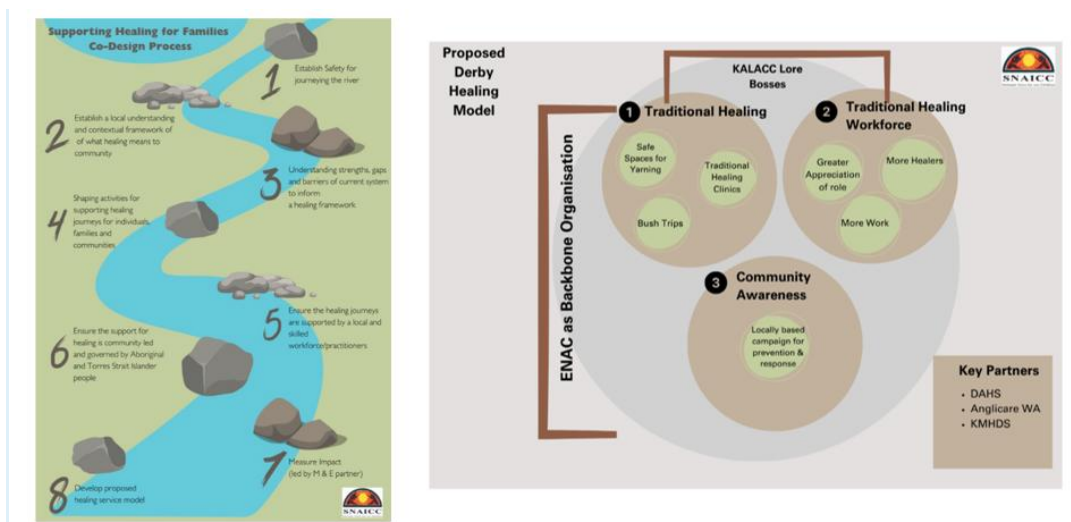
Another relevant example is the process undertaken to develop the Keeping our Kids Safe resources (as part of NAP 1 – 'Implement and promote the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations'). The National Office engaged SNAICC and the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children during the process of developing these resources. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were also chiefly involved through the NIAA and community providers in developing five healing approaches for specific communities under CAP 7 ('Develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing approaches', see Box 6.1 and Appendices A.5 and A.6 for case studies on CAP 6 and CAP 7 respectively).

Box 6.1 Commonwealth Action Plan Activity 7 (CAP 7): Develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing approaches

Under CAP 7, the NIAA – a government agency that works in partnership to enable the self-determination and aspirations of First Nations communities – is tasked with partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experts to develop healing approaches that are co-designed, place-based and complement the specialist support service system for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims and survivors of child sexual abuse.

The NIAA established an Indigenous Expert Group (IEG) to provide advice and expertise to ensure the program is trauma-aware and healing-informed and centred on Indigenous values and priorities. The NIAA partnered closely with the IEG to deliver the co-design framework, which will guide the design and implementation of the healing services.

Figure 6.1: An example of a proposed healing model



The healing initiatives are designed to provide culturally appropriate service system options for First Nations individuals and families impacted by child sexual abuse. In doing so, these initiatives will help address the absence of a trauma-aware and healing-informed culturally safe and accessible service systems for First Nations peoples.

For more information on this case study, see 1AP Evaluation - Appendix A (Case Studies) Appendix A.6.

6.1.2 To what extent has feedback from victims, survivors and other priority groups been addressed in the implementation, evaluation, and reporting of the Action Plan?

6.1.2.1 Implementation

Several 1AP activities are yet to be fully implemented. As such, it is currently unclear the extent to which these may incorporate feedback from these groups (see Appendix F for an assessment of the implementation of each 1AP activity). While there is limited direct evidence of feedback from victims, survivors and other priority groups being addressed in the implementation of 1AP activities, stakeholders broadly indicated that this regularly occurred. 6 out of 8 NSAG survey respondents indicated that feedback from priority groups was listened to and considered when carrying out the 1AP (4 'agree', 2 'strongly agree', n=8).

There is evidence that feedback from priority population cohorts has informed the implementation of multiple 1AP activities. One prominent example of this is in the development of media guides for reporting on child sexual abuse under CAP 1 ('Support strategic communication of the National Strategic and its outcomes'). Initially, the National Office commissioned the University of Canberra News and Media Research Centre to develop evidence-based media guides to encourage responsible reporting on child sexual abuse. However, following the presentation of these resources to the NSAG, it suggested that guidance be developed for victims and survivors engaging with the media. This suggestion was acted upon, resulting in a guide (including an Easy Read and translated versions) for victims and survivors.

At an activity level, feedback from children and young people's support networks in CALD communities was also sought during the development, refinement and finalisation of the resources developed under CAP 4 (see Appendix A.4). However, as noted in Section 6.1.1, priority groups, including First Nations people, people with disability and people identifying as LGBTQIA+, were underrepresented in 1AP implementation, evaluation and reporting, suggesting that they were also underrepresented in feedback processes.

6.1.2.2 Evaluation and reporting

Priority groups were involved in the design and refinement of the National Strategy M&E Framework. The M&E Framework was co-designed by the Framework Co-design Working Group comprised of NGCG members representing priority groups and government representatives with expertise in monitoring and evaluation. Priority group representatives consisted of individuals, peak bodies and non-government organisations.

The Framework Co-design Working Group conducted 5 workshops and undertook supporting out-of-session activities to develop the Framework. The National Office also conducted consultations with NGCGs to validate and finalise the Framework prior to its release in June 2024. The National Office has also introduced several key co-design related principles to guide future monitoring and evaluation of the National Strategy. Examples of relevant principles include:

- The measurement of medium-term outcomes (which refer to the specific and measurable changes that are expected because of activities being implemented) will focus on the impact of activities for children and young people, victims and survivors, families, kin and carers, communities, and organisations and governments (though individual activities may not result in material changes for all these groups)
- Long-term outcomes should refer to the sustained changes required to reduce the risk, extent and impact of child sexual abuse and related harms in Australia

6.2 Achievement of short-term outcomes

Key finding 10: The successful implementation of some 1AP activities has established a foundation which can be built on in the 2AP. As some activities remain in progress, it is not possible to assess the degree to which these activities have contributed to the National Strategy's outcomes.

There are several limitations that impact this evaluation's ability to assess the achievement of short-term outcomes. First, short-term outcomes are developed at an activity level and are currently not included within the National Strategy M&E Framework. Information on short-term outcomes was only provided for selected activities (particularly for activities that were selected to be case studies – refer to Appendix A). Second, while the M&E Framework outlines specific indicators to support assessments on the achievement of short-term outcomes, Deloitte did not receive data to demonstrate progress across these indicators. Finally, as described in Section 4.1, most activities are midway through implementation and have not collected meaningful data to support assessments of their impact and effectiveness. The evaluation approaches adopted by individual activities are also inconsistent (see Section 5.2). Notwithstanding these identified gaps, some Activity Leads and government stakeholders provided evidence of specific short-term outcomes achieved. These examples include:

1. Increased community awareness of child sexual abuse.

Some 1AP activities have contributed to increased community awareness of child sexual abuse. One such example is the 'One Talk at a Time' campaign delivered under NAP 6 ('Deliver a national awareness raising campaign on child sexual abuse'). The evaluation of the campaign's advertising, digital audio and video content identified improvements in key attitudes, perceptions and behaviours in the community.⁴²

Box 6.2 National Action Plan Activity 6 (NAP 6): Deliver a national awareness-raising campaign on child sexual abuse

As part of the standard campaign evaluation process, the National Office contracted Hall & Partners to evaluate the campaign's advertising, digital audio and video content. The National Office advised that an integrated evaluation including advertisements, media partnerships and public relations activities is underway, and as such findings from this integrated evaluation are not available as of September 2025. However, early findings indicate the campaign performed well in raising awareness of the topic and contributing to positive attitudinal and behavioural changes related to having preventative conversations. Through paid media activity, the campaign amassed over 73 million views.

The National Office has collected social media engagement data, which shows that in addition to paid campaign advertising, the 'One Talk at a Time' campaign has been watched approximately 12,000 times on ChildSafety.gov.au online channels.⁴³ When aggregated together, the published resources on ChildSafety.gov.au have been viewed over 42,000 times and downloaded 9,241 times. The most viewed resource is the '*Having conversations with children and young people*', which has been viewed almost 10,000 times. The resource provides topics and conversation starters to help adults talk to preschool, primary school-age children and teenagers about child sexual abuse.

Since the launch of the 'One Talk at a Time' campaign, the ChildSafety.gov.au website has seen an 826% increase in visitation on the previous period, representing more than 1.6 million unique visitors (as at 11 August 2025).⁴⁴ The National Office also noted that anecdotally, sector stakeholders have high awareness of and have expressed positive feedback regarding the campaign.

For more information on this case study, see 1AP Evaluation - Appendix A (Case Studies) Appendix A.1.

The resources delivered under CAP 4 ('prevent online harms and promote safe online practices for children and young people') are another example of 1AP activities prompting increased community awareness. While there is no data available

⁴² This finding is drawn from Australian National Audit Office. (2025, March 31). Auditor-General Report No. 29 2024–25: Australian Government Advertising: November 2021 to November 2024 (Performance Audit). The Hall & Partners evaluation report outcome were based on advertising (videos shown on TV, online or cinema, digital audio and video content on social media). AGD advised the ANAO in August 2024 that an integrated evaluation including advertisements, media partnerships and public relations activities will be undertaken in 2025.

⁴³ This finding is related to content posted directly to the National Office for Child Safety's social media channels and does not represent views of the campaign on social media through paid advertising, which is part of the integrated evaluation. Correct as of 23 May 2025

⁴⁴ According to program data shared by the National Office for Child Safety

on the number of views of each resource, the eSafety Commissioner stated that CALD parents and carers considered the resources to be useful in supporting conversations with children and young people in their care about safety from child sexual abuse online (see Appendix A.4 for a case study on CAP 4).

'The Shadows of the Web' documentary, delivered under CAP 6 about the role of the digital industry in preventing and responding to online child sexual abuse, has been widely viewed since its release in August 2024. While the documentary was eventually hosted on a subscription-based streaming service, which has varied its accessibility to the public, it has had an estimated viewership of more than 500,000 (as at June 2025). This wide viewership suggests that the documentary has played a role in increasing community awareness about the role of technology in facilitating child sexual abuse (see Appendix A.6 for a case study on CAP 6).

These examples broadly align with NGCG survey respondents' views on the 1AP's impact on community awareness: 16 out of 21 NGCG respondents indicated that the 1AP had made progress towards increased awareness and understanding of child sexual abuse (11 'agree', 5 'strongly agree', n=21). However, some policy stakeholders also noted that it remains challenging to (a) reach new audiences for child sexual abuse communications, and (b) identify when new audiences have been reached.

2. The establishment of targeted resources and legal services for victims and survivors

Some 1AP activities have made progress towards delivering targeted resources and legal services for victims and survivors, which are primarily captured under Theme 2: Supporting and empowering victims and survivors. However, as several Theme 2 activities have not been fully implemented, the associated outcomes may have not been fully realised.

Service provision activities delivered under Theme 2 are generally readily assessable for their impact because it is often more straightforward to gather summary data such as:

- Number of clients who engage with the service
- Total and per-client count of interactions with the service
- Tasks undertaken by the service to support clients
- Duration of interactions
- Results and next steps of interactions
- Number of clients who are referred to other services.

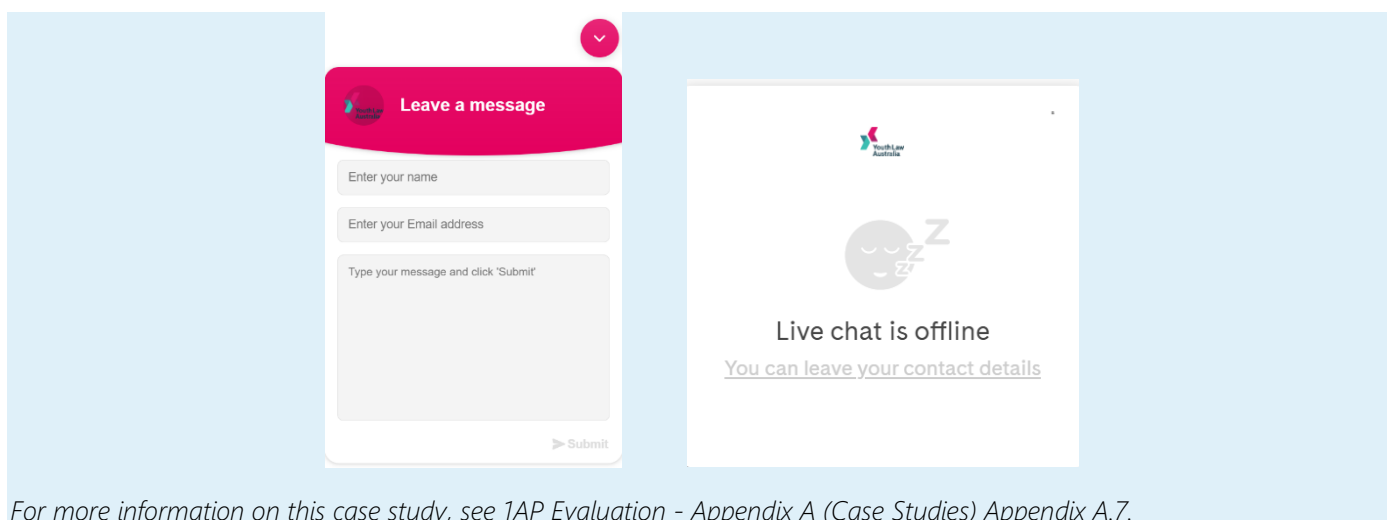
This provides an easily digestible data picture from which to assess the impacts of services, both during their delivery and in retrospective evaluation activities.

One example of a support service delivered is the Youth Law Australia's (YLA) online chat service for free legal assistance to children and young people experiencing or at risk of harm under CAP 9 ('set up an online chat service to deliver free legal assistance services to children and young people experiencing or at risk of harm (including sexual abuse)'). YLA includes child sexual abuse but also provides assistance for other issues such as domestic and family violence and bullying. While an independent evaluation suggested that YLA had improved access to legal assistance for children and young people, delivery stakeholders also noted that approximately 1,500 children and young people were referred to other legal services each year due to resourcing constraints (see Box 6.2 or Appendix A.7 for a case study on CAP 9).

Box 6.3 Commonwealth Action Plan Activity 9 (CAP 9): Set up an online chat service to deliver free legal assistance services to children and young people experiencing or at risk of harm (including sexual abuse)

YLA began developing the chat service in July 2021. As part of the design process, YLA conducted market research on other chat services in October 2021 to identify current gaps in the market. Research identified that existing services only provided guided pathways or require long wait times. YLA additionally consulted with external organisations, such as Kids Helpline and Legal Aid, to assist with the design and implementation of their service. As such, the distinctive feature of YLA's online chat service compared with other support services is that clients can connect with a staff member and receive real time information for their issue.

The live chat is available between 10am and 4pm AEST Monday to Friday and will pop up when a client accesses certain website pages.



For more information on this case study, see 1AP Evaluation - Appendix A (Case Studies) Appendix A.7.

CAP 8 ('expand the national specialist trauma-informed legal service') was delivered through the expansion of Knowmore, which provides legal and support services to victims and survivors of child sexual abuse in non-institutional settings. An independent evaluation of CAP 8 concluded that while there were significant evidence limitations affecting its assessment, there were positive signs of achieving outcomes including:

- victims and survivors who access the service feel empowered and supported, and
- victims and survivors are not retraumatised by accessing the service.

These warrant continued monitoring and evaluation efforts to support ongoing assessments on the effectiveness of activities.

These examples demonstrate the importance of identifying opportunities to deliver activities through pre-existing structures. Delivering CAP 8 and 9 through Knowmore and YLA respectively has expedited their implementation through avoiding establishing a new entity or vehicle for service delivery, and through leveraging pre-existing community recognition and goodwill. Activity Lead representatives for CAP 9 noted that they had conducted a site visit where they had observed the pre-existing resourcing and knowledge that allowed it to be delivered in a more informed and timely way.

However, many of the 1AP activities under Theme 2 have not been fully implemented so have not yet provided greater support to victims and survivors. For example, NAP 7 ('deliver a national information and referral service for victims and survivors of child sexual abuse and others seeking help and information') is yet to be fully delivered, including because the National Office conducted the baseline analysis of specialist and community support services (NAP 24) first to inform the design of NAP 7, and consulted broadly on the design of NAP 7 with government, the service sector and community⁴⁵, as well as because of delays arising from the complexity of procuring a new service of this nature. As of September 2025, the second stage – Request for Tender – of the procurement process is underway.

These diverging levels of progress are broadly reflected in responses to the 1AP surveys. 17 out of 25 respondents indicated that the outcome 'victims and survivors are better recognised and believed at all stages of disclosure and complaint' is on track (14 'moderately on track', 3 'significantly on track'). However, when asked about the outcome 'victims and survivors, including secondary victims, are supported and empowered to manage the impacts of child sexual abuse', 12 out of 25 of respondents indicated that it was on track (10 'moderately on track', 2 'significantly on track') while 9 out of 25 indicated that it was not (6 'moderately off track', 3 'significantly off track').

⁴⁵ The consultation summaries for the national information and referral service can be found at: <<https://www.childsafety.gov.au/resources/final-national-point-referral-service-sector-and-government-consultations-summary>> ; and <<https://www.childsafety.gov.au/resources/final-national-point-referral-community-consultations-summary-2023>>.

3. The generation of new evidence and research on child sexual abuse

Respondents to the surveys indicated that these activities had contributed to achieving their intended outcomes:

- 18 out of 22 of survey respondents indicated that the 1AP was on track to achieve the outcome 'high-quality evidence and knowledge are available on effective and best practice early interventions and holistic responses to child sexual abuse' (14 'significantly on track', 4 'moderately on track').
- 20 out of 22 of survey respondents indicated that the 1AP was on track to generate 'high-quality evidence and knowledge on the prevalence and incidence of child sexual abuse' (11 'significantly on track', 9 'moderately on track').

Completed or implemented 1AP activities have contributed to improvements in the evidence base relating to child sexual abuse offending. Examples include as CAP 31 ('use statistics to understand the nature and scale of Australians committing child sexual abuse offences') and CAP 32 ('complete a survey of adult offenders'). Additionally, NAP 29 ('develop a scoping study for and establish an Australian Child Wellbeing Data Asset') has been delivered with a view to capture a broader data picture of child wellbeing, including child sexual abuse (see Box 6.3 and Appendix A.8 for a case study on NAP 29).

The strong support among both government and non-government stakeholders to collectively build the evidence base has been identified as a key factor contributing to the achievement of this outcome. This is particularly important as it supports the sector to navigate issues such as:

- the technical and administrative burden associated with collecting, collating and analysing the new data required to construct a robust evidence base on child sexual abuse; and
- the varying legislative and non-legislative barriers to obtaining new and existing data sets from custodians across the child safe sector.

Box 6.4 National Action Plan Activity 29: Develop a scoping study for and establish an Australian Child Wellbeing Data Asset (CWDA)

The CWDA is being developed to provide independent data reporting on child maltreatment in Australia and may also inform future research areas. The design of the CWDA incorporates a tailored approach to priority population cohorts (6.3b), and also addresses the Royal Commission's recommendations 6.3di & 6.3dii as it will strengthen a currently limited evidence base and inform future interventions to address CSA.

The design of the CWDA was informed by several research and governance phases. In 2022, AIHW engaged the Social Research Centre (SRC) to conduct a scoping study to identify policy priorities the CWDA could support. This project involved consultation with over 54 stakeholder agencies to identify data needs related to the National Strategy, as well as a literature and desktop review of child wellbeing frameworks. Agencies consulted with included government agencies, academics, nongovernment organisations and peak bodies. Through this process, 8 policy priority areas were identified – child safety, youth justice, mental health, early years, families, student wellbeing, priority populations and Closing the Gap.

For more information on this case study, see 1AP Evaluation - Appendix A (Case Studies) Appendix A.8.

6.3 Achievement of medium- and long-term outcomes

The National Strategy M&E Framework contains 19 medium-term outcomes and 6 long-term outcomes. While this evaluation primarily addresses the extent to which intended short-term outcomes have been achieved, it also provides an assessment of the early indications of progress towards achieving medium-term outcomes. As a result of limited secondary data on medium- and long-term outcomes, these assessments are mainly drawn from stakeholder feedback via survey responses.

Theme 1: Awareness raising, education and building child safe cultures

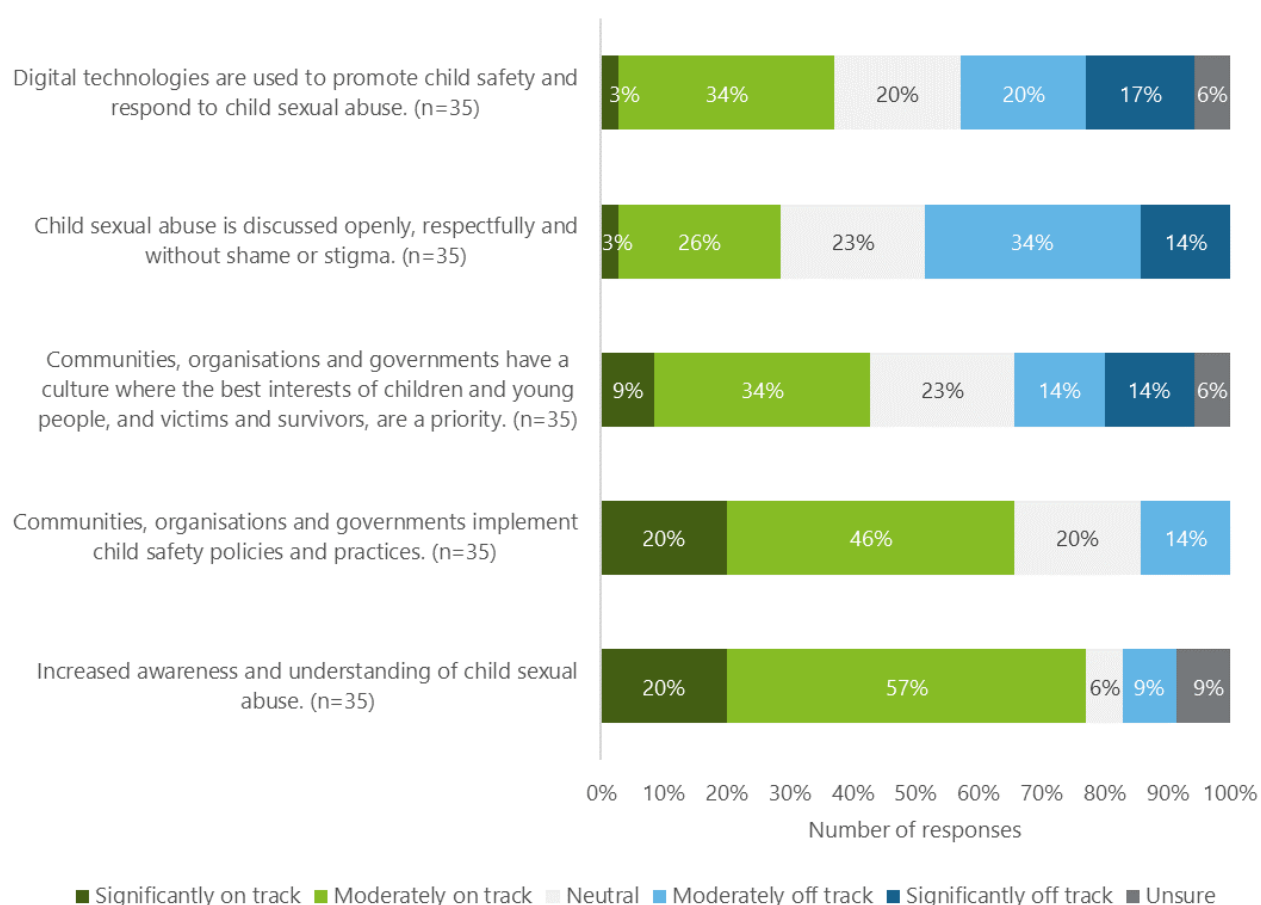
Stakeholders perceive that 1AP has contributed to improved awareness and understanding of child sexual abuse. However, more can be done to reduce community stigma to openly discuss child sexual abuse. The role of digital technologies can also be elevated to promote child safety and respond to child sexual abuse.

Medium-term outcomes under Theme 1 include enhanced awareness and understanding of child sexual abuse among stakeholders, implementation of child safety policies that prioritise children, foster open discussions devoid of shame and stigma, and leverage digital technologies to bolster child safety.

A high proportion of government and non-government survey respondents agree that the 1AP is on track to achieve selected medium-term outcomes relating to understanding child sexual abuse and implementing child safety policies. While these responses are encouraging, there were more mixed perspectives on the degree to which 1AP activities have contributed to the adoption of child safe cultures such as discussing child sexual abuse openly without shame or stigma, and using digital technologies to promote child safety and respond to child sexual abuse (see Chart 6.1).

These observations are consistent with stakeholder feedback received through consultations on the ongoing challenges of engaging with priority population cohorts on child sexual abuse (see Section 5.1). Some stakeholders also indicated the need for more consistent investment in awareness raising and education activities to support more consistent adoption of child safe cultures within organisations and workplaces. These suggestions have informed the development of proposed content for future action plans (see Section 8).

Chart 6.1: Responses to several questions asking ‘Thinking of the activities you engaged with, to what extent do you think the 1AP has made progress towards achieving the following medium-term outcomes:’



Source: Deloitte Access Economics.

Theme 2: Supporting and empowering victims and survivors

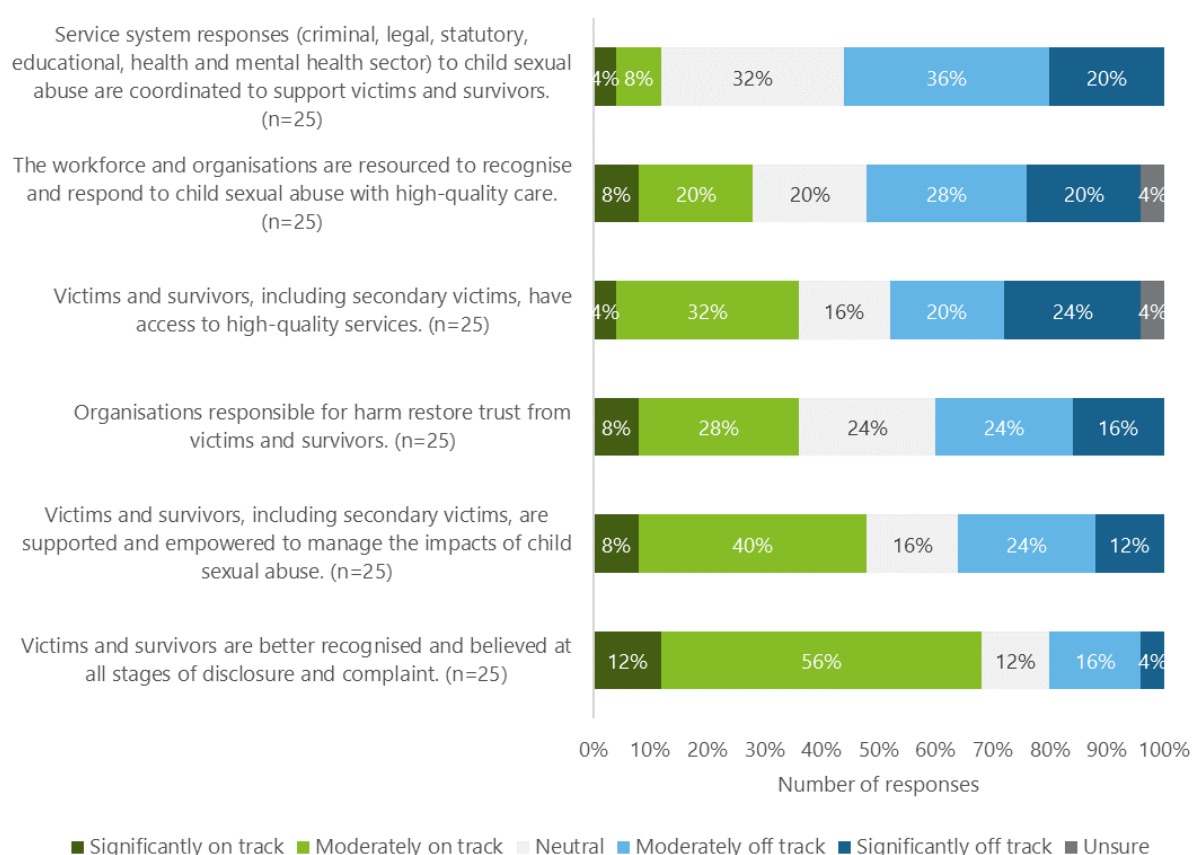
While there is improved recognition of the lived experiences of victims and survivors, stakeholder feedback identified scope for future action plans to improve the capacity and capability of the service system to support victims and survivors.

Theme 2's medium-term outcomes focus on providing trauma-informed support services for victims, enhancing collaboration among child protection entities, offering training programs for effective response, establishing oversight mechanisms, integrating prevention strategies into education and communities, and empowering children through safety education. Key themes encompass victim support, collaboration, training, oversight, prevention, and empowerment.

Aggregated survey responses generally suggested that outcomes relating to organisations' attitudes towards victims and survivors are somewhat on track. Specifically, responses noted improvements in victims and survivors being better recognised and believed, and greater support and empowerment to manage the impacts of child sexual abuse. However, respondents were less confident that attitudinal changes among organisations had led to restored trust between them and victims and survivors. Additionally, respondents suggested that further work is required to recognise and respond to child sexual abuse, and to coordinate support across the service system (see Chart 6.2).

The overall mixed views on the achievement of Theme 2 outcomes may be attributed to the varying levels of implementation progress across Theme 2 activities in both the NAP and CAP (see Chart 4.3 and Chart 4.4). For example, some Theme 2 activities that relate to service provision (for example, CAP7 - Develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing approaches - see Appendix A.6) have not formally commenced.

Chart 6.2: Responses to several questions asking 'Thinking of the activities you engaged with, to what extent do you think the 1AP has made progress towards achieving the following medium-term outcomes:'



Source: Deloitte Access Economics.

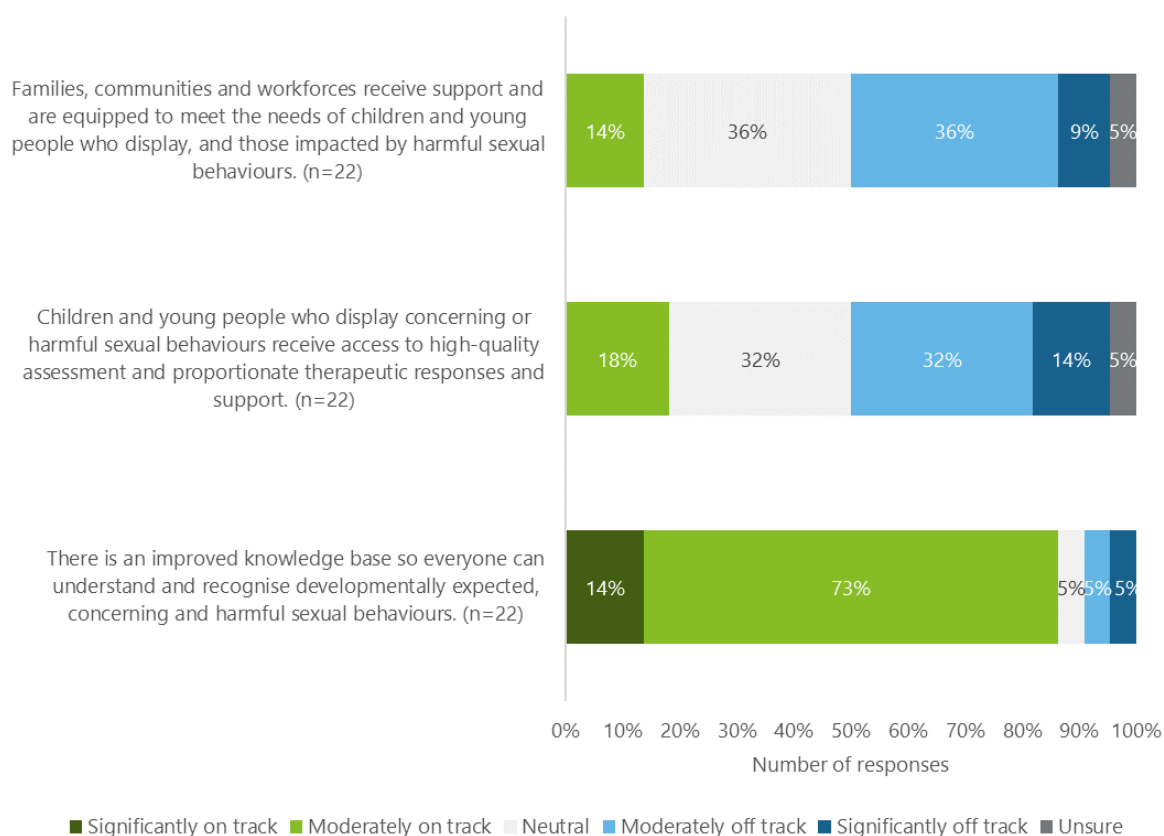
Theme 3: Enhancing national approaches to children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours

The 1AP has improved the knowledge base to support improved understanding and recognition of children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours. There is comparatively less observed progress in improving service systems to support both children who display harmful sexual behaviours as well as parties impacted by children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours (e.g. children, families, communities).

Theme 3 medium-term outcomes aim to improve awareness and understanding of what constitutes expected sexual development, increase availability of high-quality services for children and young people who have displayed concerning or harmful sexual behaviours, and improve workforce capability and capacity for responding to concerning or harmful sexual behaviours displayed by children and young people. Key themes include awareness raising, workforce capability, and evidence-based prevention and response.

At this stage of the 1AP's implementation, there is consensus that the 1AP has improved the evidence base to support better recognition of expected, concerning and harmful sexual behaviours. However, there are more mixed views on the progress towards achievement on outcomes relating to service provision (see Chart 6.3). These observations may be driven in part by the fact that none of the Theme 3 activities have been completed and all are at varying levels of implementation progress (see Chart 4.2). It is also noted that outcomes related to expansions of services for children and young people are inherently more complex to achieve as they would require significant financial input from stakeholders across the sector, support from clinical bodies and comprehensive governance arrangements to support implementation.

Chart 6.3: Responses to several questions asking 'Thinking of the activities you engaged with, to what extent do you think the 1AP has made progress towards achieving the following medium-term outcomes:'



Source: Deloitte Access Economics.

Theme 4: Offending prevention and intervention

At this stage of the 1AP's implementation, the outcome of improve justice system responses and service provision for offenders, perpetrators and those at risk of perpetrating child sexual abuse has not been fully realised.

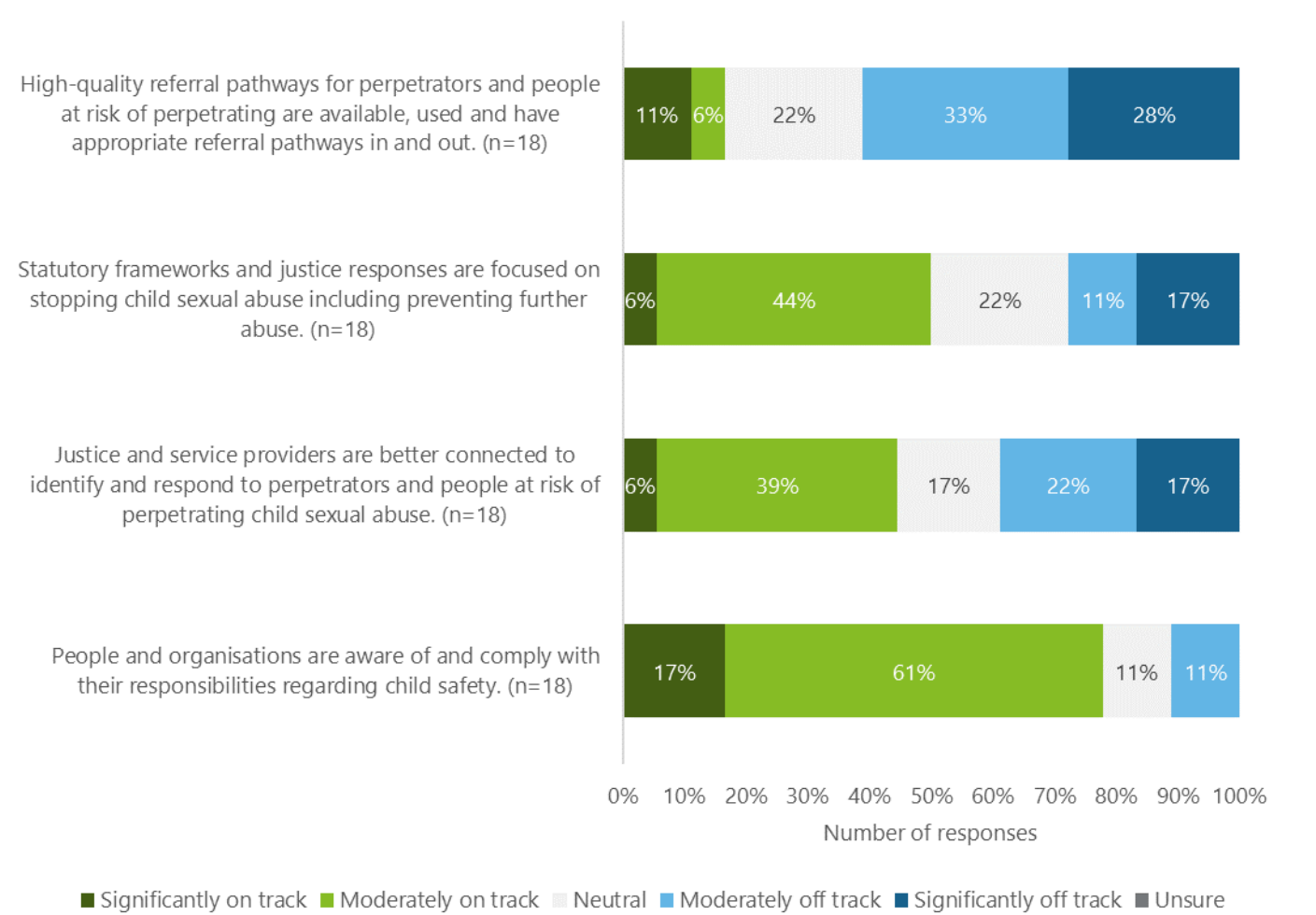
Theme 4 medium-term outcomes aim to strengthen multi-sectoral partnerships, increase funding for child protection initiatives, enhance international cooperation on child safeguarding, and monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of implemented strategies.

Aggregated survey responses indicated that positive progress had been made in increasing community awareness of child safety obligations, and in developing statutory frameworks and justice responses that focus on prevention and stopping

child sexual abuse. However, respondents were less confident regarding progress towards outcomes relating to referral pathways for perpetrators and people at risk (see Chart 6.4).

Similar to other Themes, a proportion of Theme 4 activities have experienced issues impacting implementation (see Chart 4.2), which creates challenges to meaningfully assess the degree to which these activities have contributed to the achievement of National Strategy outcomes.

Chart 6.4: Responses to several questions asking ‘Thinking of the activities you engaged with, to what extent do you think the 1AP has made progress towards achieving the following medium-term outcomes:’



Source: Deloitte Access Economics.

Theme 5: Improving the evidence base

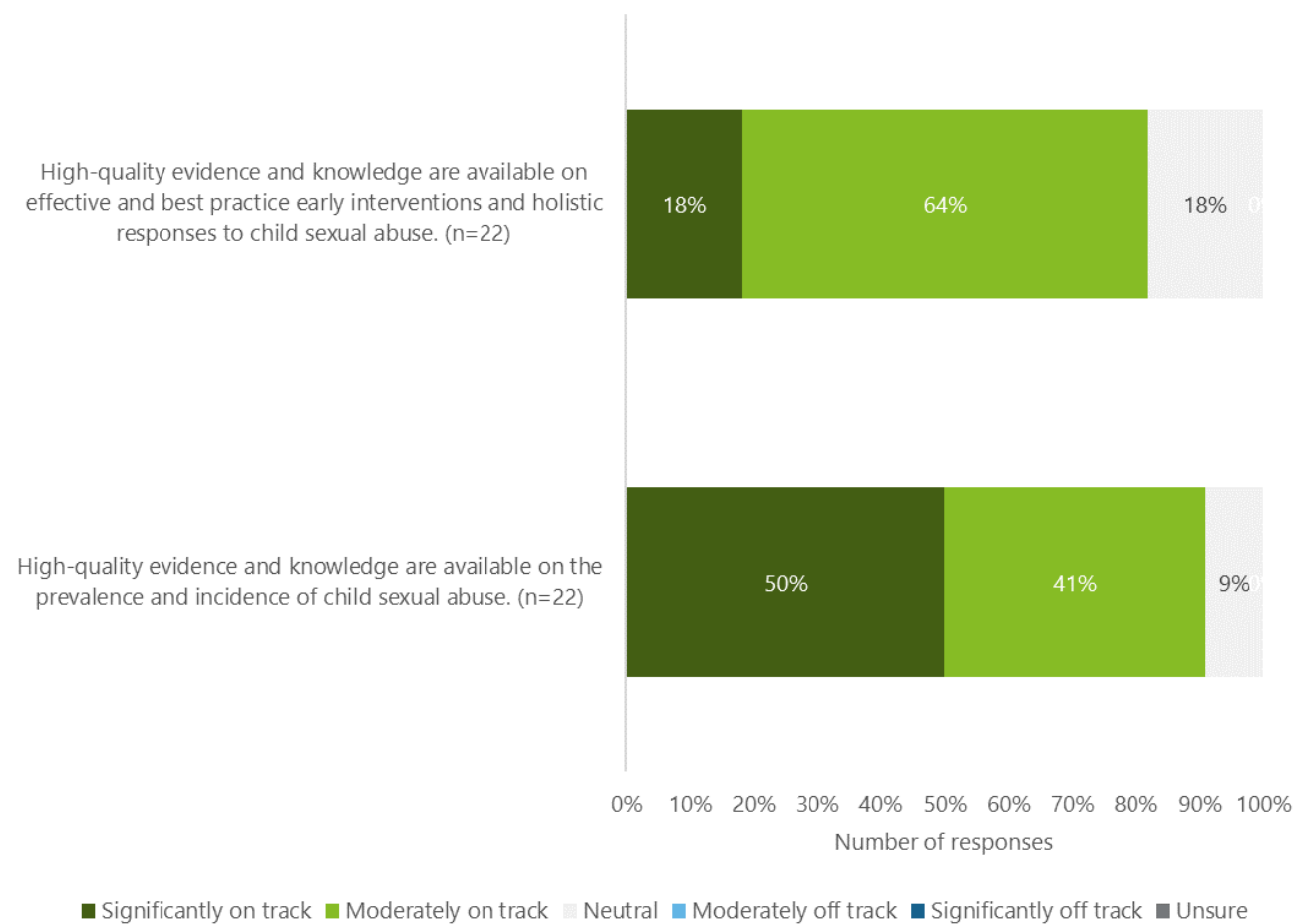
The 1AP is broadly on track to strengthen the evidence base on the prevalence and incidence of child sexual abuse.

Theme 5 medium-term outcomes focus on establishing robust evidence on the prevalence and incidence of child sexual abuse, and effective and best-practice early interventions and responses to child sexual abuse.

NGCG survey respondents broadly suggested that there are encouraging signs of progress towards achieving a robust evidence base (see Chart 6.5).

These positive perceptions are directly aligned with the assessment of implementation progress of 1AP activities. As shown in Chart 4.2, Theme 5 reported a higher proportion of completed activities (50%, n=5) compared to other Themes.

Chart 6.5: Responses to several questions asking ‘Thinking of the activities you engaged with, to what extent do you think the 1AP has made progress towards achieving the following medium-term outcomes:’



Source: Deloitte Access Economics.

7. Improvement opportunities.

Table 7.1: Mapping relevant sections responding to the key evaluation questions and sub-evaluation questions

Domain	Key evaluation question	Sub-evaluation question	Relevant section
Improvement opportunities	Are there opportunities for improvement in relation to program fidelity?	What are the key lessons from the implementation of 1AP, and how can this be applied to enhance the design and implementation of future action plans?	7.1 <i>Note: Improvement opportunities have been included throughout relevant chapters of the report.</i>

7.1 Key lessons

This evaluation has identified eight key lessons to inform future approaches to design and implement future action plans:

1. Consideration of differences in the nature and type of child sexual abuse

There are significant differences in the nature and type of child sexual abuse (e.g., intrafamilial child sexual abuse and child sexual abuse perpetrated in institutional settings). Future actions need to be scoped appropriately to acknowledge these nuances.

Child sexual abuse can take multiple forms, including familial abuse, extra-familial abuse and institutional abuse. The ACMS study categorises child sexual abuse incidents by classes of perpetrators to consider the different types of adult perpetrators (e.g. parents/caregivers, institutional caregivers) and adolescents who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours (e.g. siblings, known and unknown adolescents). According to the Royal Commission, survivors also described other forms of child sexual abuse such as non-penetrative contact abuse, violations of privacy, exposure to sexual acts and materials and sexual exploitation⁴⁶. Each type of abuse presents unique dynamics and risk factors, which implies potential differences in the distinct prevention and intervention approach.

It is acknowledged that the 1AP has a specific theme for children who display harmful sexual behaviours (Theme 3). While the breadth of activities in the 1AP is driven in part by these differences, it is important that future action plans provide greater clarity on the different types of abuse that individual activities are seeking to address. It is also important to design and scope activities that are tailored to address the specific nature of each form of abuse.

2. Design of activities

It is important to design specific and targeted actions with clearly specified implementation timeframes.

It is critical to design specific and targeted actions with clear timeframes to ensure that there is meaningful and timely progress in the implementation of child sexual abuse reforms. The design of future action plan activities should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART):

- **Specific:** specificity on what will be done, the target cohort and the types of child sexual abuse that the action is preventing or responding to.

⁴⁶ Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. (n.d.). *Nature and cause*. Retrieved October 8, 2025, from <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/nature-and-cause>

- **Measurable:** clarity on how the key outcomes and indicators of success. These outcomes and indicators should be aligned with the National Strategy's M&E Framework.
- **Achievable:** the design of activities should consider what is achievable based on current sector readiness, available resources and service system maturities across different states/territories. Clarity on activity scope will also be important to inform decisions on resourcing requirements to fully implement activities. This would address the identified issues of staffing and financial resourcing constraints which were experienced by some 1AP Activity Leads.
- **Relevant:** the activity should clearly address a known and identified problem or gap within the sector. In some instances, it may be appropriate to invest time and resourcing to assess community and service system readiness and engage relevant stakeholder groups to clarify the key gaps that future action plans need to address prior to including these activities in the action plan.
- **Time-bound:** there should be specific timeframes by which activities will be delivered.

This structured approach enables regular progress tracking and reinforces accountability across all relevant stakeholders. A more precise and streamlined list of activities may also be warranted to ensure that investment is directed towards the most significant reform priorities.

3. Implementation approach

An initial investment in time and resourcing is required in the early stages of activity implementation to understand community needs, assess the readiness of service system(s), engage relevant subject matter experts and develop relationships with stakeholders.

Multiple 1AP activities experienced implementation delays due to the need to further scope activities, identify the target cohort and confirm the gaps that reforms are seeking to address. Based on recent experiences of implementing 1AP activities, it may be warranted for government agencies to invest time and resourcing to assess community and service system readiness, engage relevant subject matter experts, develop relationships with stakeholders and ensure that any planned interventions are appropriate and feasible for the service system landscape. This process should ideally occur prior to the inclusion of activities in action plans.

By dedicating effort upfront, practitioners can gain a deep understanding of the local context, establish mechanisms for structured engagements with subject matter experts (including representative of priority population cohorts), identify potential barriers and enablers, and gauge the capacity of existing services to engage in and support reform efforts. Just as importantly, undertaking this process earlier allows for the development of trusted relationships with key stakeholders (e.g. other state/territory government departments, community leaders, service providers). These relationships form the basis for meaningful collaboration and shared ownership of the reform process. Without this preparatory work, reform initiatives risk being misaligned with local needs and values, reducing their impact and long-term success.

4. Regular communication

Regular communication on 1AP achievements to all relevant stakeholders (including the general public, service providers and peak bodies) is critical to maintain enthusiasm for reforms and elevate credibility of the National Strategy.

Multiple stakeholder groups are involved in the implementation of 1AP, partly due to the breadth of activities included in the action plans. Some consulted stakeholders are also part of different governance groups which have separate remit and responsibilities. An unintended consequence of this design is that not all stakeholders have a consistent understanding on the overall progress of the 1AP's implementation and perceive overall implementation to be slower-than-expected. This is despite the development of annual reports to report progress in the implementation of 1AP activities.

Greater consistency in sharing updates on progress, achievements, challenges and mitigation strategies will improve transparency, foster trust and further demonstrate governments' commitment to address this critical issue. Ongoing communication will also help maintain focus on reform goals, motivate continued action implementation and counter any potential misinformation on the National Strategy.

5. Collaboration and authorising environment

Stakeholder buy-in from state/territory governments and a strong authorising environment are important to facilitate collaboration and reform momentum for multi-year national reforms such as the National Strategy.

The 1AP comprises both interjurisdictional and nationally-driven activities. State/territory ownership of these reforms is essential to successful and sustained implementation. This enables jurisdictions to mobilise relevant stakeholders (e.g., involvement of relevant state/territory government departments) and commit the necessary resources to support implementation. A key enabler to implementation in this area is the presence of a strong authorising environment. Clear mandates, institutional support and the development of partnership agreements (similar to the Partnership Agreements developed for other national strategies such as Closing the Gap) will empower agencies to act decisively. Conversely, the absence of a strong authorising environment can result in slower progress in reform implementation due to competing priorities and limited resourcing allocated to support implementation.

Child sexual abuse can occur across institutional, private and digital settings and is not constrained by jurisdictional borders. Therefore, it is important to strengthen the authorising environment, clarify shared responsibilities and ensure nationally consistent and coordinated approaches to reduce fragmentation and support effective implementation of the National Strategy.

6. Engagement with priority population cohorts

There are ethical and cultural considerations when engaging on a topic such as child sexual abuse, particularly with specific priority groups, including children and young people. This is particularly critical in relation to ensuring culturally safe and respectful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This needs to be taken into consideration during the planning and resourcing of activities.

Engaging with priority population cohorts on the sensitive and deeply personal issue of child sexual abuse requires a strong focus on ethical and cultural considerations to ensure the process is safe, respectful and trauma informed. Meaningful engagement cannot be rushed; it takes time to build trust, ensure cultural safety and create environments where individuals feel secure to share their perspectives. In particular, culturally safe and respectful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individual and communities are especially critical to ensure that approaches are grounded in self-determination. In practice, this would include establishing structured and meaningful opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to provide feedback on the design, governance and implementation of activities.

It is also important to mitigate the risk of consultation fatigue and leverage existing data collection and research, with a view to only undertake additional engagement activities to address data gaps and/or to progress implementation (e.g. co-design specific implementation activities).

The considerations mentioned above need to be taken into account in resourcing planning – not only for culturally competent staffing resources/providers, accessible communication tools – but also for the time required to conduct engagement at a pace that respects the needs and readiness of each community. Specific to First Nations activities, a non-government stakeholder also recommended for engagement with First Nations children and young people to adhere to guidance articulated in the 'Keeping Our Kids Safe: Cultural Safety and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations' guidelines published by SNAICC.

7. Data collection, monitoring and evaluation approaches

More data should be collected to enable more robust assessments of the impact of government investment in child sexual abuse reforms, including the achievement of outcomes in the National Strategy's M&E Framework.

Monitoring and evaluation supported by robust data collection are essential to assess the implementation progress and impact of the National Strategy. The National Strategy's M&E Framework provides a structured approach to track progress against a consistent list of medium- and long-term outcomes. It is important for all activities to align monitoring and evaluation approaches to this overarching framework to assist with overall assessments on the collective impact of reforms.

Evaluations require collection of reliable and disaggregated data to allow policymakers and service providers to identify trends, assess the reach and impact of prevention and response efforts, and adapt strategies to emerging needs. During activity design stages, there should be consideration of the resourcing required to support data collection and evaluation activities.

8. Community-based approaches

Community-based approaches are recommended for activities which involve the establishment of new services in a particular community.

The implementation of a community-based approach is vital when designing and delivering targeted supports to specific communities. This ensures that the services are deeply attuned to the specific cultural and geographic context of a community.

Earlier engagement with stakeholders in a local area will help build a shared understanding on the service system maturities of geographic areas, and the local needs of those areas. This method – as is currently implemented in CAP 7 (develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing approaches) – will build community ownership, reduce barriers to access and increase the likelihood that the target cohort receive the most appropriate supports.

8. Recommendations.

This evaluation has identified several opportunities to enhance the design and implementation of the National Strategy's Second Action Plan (2AP). These recommendations relate to:

- the overarching approach to design and implement the 2AP, and
- recommended activities to be included in the 2AP.

8.1 Recommendations to support the design and implementation of the 2AP

Recommendation 1: Develop more targeted and specific activities with a combination of “quick wins” and longer-term reforms. All activities should adhere to the SMART principles (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound).

Designing targeted and specific activities

The National Office can consider ensuring that the design of future 2AP activities to:

- **be anchored on the theme-specific Theory of Change** that has been developed for the National Strategy (as articulated in the National Strategy's M&E Framework⁴⁷). For example, any future Theme 1 activities should be aligned with desired outcomes (e.g. increased awareness and understanding of child sexual abuse, digital technologies are used to promote child safety and respond to child sexual abuse).
- **adhere to the SMART principles** where possible and relevant (see Section 7.1). There should ideally be specificity on what activities are seeking to achieve, how success will be tracked and measurable, the resourcing required to implement activities, the problem activities are seeking to address and the expected timeframes for completion. It is however acknowledged that some activities the benefits of clear timelines and structure need to be balanced with the need to accommodate flexibility in specific contexts. In some instances, timeline adjustment may be required to ensure culturally safe, respectful and meaningful consultation with priority population cohorts. Incorporating both structured planning and culturally responsive adaptability will strengthen the effectiveness of reform implementation.
- **adopt appropriate sequencing.** As articulated in Section 3.2, the limited specificity in implementation timeframes contributed to a lack of clarity on how to prioritise selected individual 1AP activities over others. Sequencing is especially critical for longer term transformations such as workforce capacity improvements. The design of future action plans needs to consider the series of incremental activities that would improve workforce capacity over time and across Action Plans; and how the impact of these activities can be measured.

Clarity on “quick wins” and longer-term reforms

Specific to timeframes, there can be greater clarity and communication at the outset on whether an individual activity will generate immediate impact (also known as a “**quick win**”) or are **longer term reforms** (activities that require longer implementation timeframes due to the nature of these reforms). This recognises that specific types of activities – such as systemic changes (e.g. legal amendments, curriculum reform), the rollout of new services and capacity building initiatives – are longer term in nature. In the case of longer-term reforms, clarity on the phased implementation of these actions throughout the life of the National Strategy will be important to sustain reform momentum.

The optimal funding arrangements for longer term reforms may also need to be revisited. As highlighted in Section 4.3, the implementation of some 1AP activities was impacted by limited or delayed funding arrangements. These experiences highlight the importance of establishing more stable and longer-term funding arrangements to ensure continuity of services

⁴⁷ Commonwealth of Australia, Attorney-General's Department, National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse (2021–2030): Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (2024).

and improve workforce retention through improved financial certainty. Many 1AP activities classified as ‘implemented’ may also require ongoing investment to remain effective, underscoring the need to plan for continued funding.

Recommendation 2: Ensure scoping studies, community-specific stakeholder engagement activities and research activities are undertaken before an activity is implemented. Sufficient time and resourcing are required to support the implementation of these activities.

1AP activities that were more complex and larger scale in nature experienced implementation delays due to the need to undertake foundational work such as community engagement, research and initial scoping activities to support their implementation. Several activities also lacked clear scope and guidance on how they were intended to be implemented. This necessitated further research and scoping activities to impose a more targeted focus that is implementable. These experiences highlight the importance of undertaking research and scoping activities consistently for all activities prior to full activity implementation. Examples of scoping activities include early engagement with key stakeholder groups such as people with lived experience, relevant specialist services, and representatives of priority population cohorts.

The experiences of implementing 1AP activities have highlighted the benefits of assessing reform readiness during the initial stages of implementing individual activities. Assessments on reform readiness enables:

- a stronger understanding of the sector readiness for reforms
- clarity on the availability of workforce to support reform rollouts (e.g. availability of specialist staffing to support the introduction of new services), and consequent implications on the appropriate scale of implementation, and
- assessment on the implications of jurisdictional variations in service maturity on implementation approaches.

It is therefore recommended for future National Strategy activities to conduct initial scoping studies, community engagement and other relevant research activities. These activities should ideally be undertaken prior to full activity implementation. To make this process effective, project plans should explicitly build in time and resourcing for scoping, engagement and research phases. This approach reduces the risk of delays or resistance during implementation and improves the likelihood of individual activities being implemented efficiently.

Recommendation 3: Continue and expand opportunities to communicate and celebrate National Strategy achievements and progress through more regular and transparent communication to the sector.

There is evidence of strong engagement with the National Office’s website (ChildSafety.gov.au). Since the launch of the ‘One Talk at a Time Campaign’ in October 2024, ChildSafety.gov.au has been visited 1.7 million times from 1.1 million unique users, 93 per cent of whom are new users to the site since the campaign’s launch. There is also notably high engagement with information about child sexual abuse prevention. It is therefore recommended for the National Office to build on ongoing efforts to increase communication on the National Strategy – particularly on the implementation progress of National Strategy activities. More transparent and consistent communication of progress in implementing National Strategy activities will reduce instances of misinformation and increase community. Potential activities to support this include:

- The development of a **communication strategy** to ensure there is a coordinated approach to communicate the progress of future action plans. The strategy will identify key audiences and specify communication tools, key messages, timelines and approaches to address communication-related risks. It is especially important for communication on 1AP activities to be accessible for different stakeholder groups. That requires careful contextualisation of any key messages, and potential simplification of communication for particular cohorts (e.g. children and young people).
- The establishment of an accessible **public reform progress dashboard**. The development of a live and user-friendly online dashboard can be considered to track progress on major reform actions. The dashboard should include timelines, milestone updates (particularly for longer term reforms), outcome measures. Visuals such as traffic lights and maps are recommended to improve the accessibility of the dashboard.
- The development of **regular progress updates to governance groups**. As governance groups include peak bodies, victims and survivors and service body representatives, it will be important for all governance group members to receive regular updates (e.g. biannual or quarterly progress bulletins) on the National Strategy’s action plan implementation. These updates can include information on potential factors contributing to implementation delays, testimonials and

data snapshots (aligned to the indicators included in the National Strategy's M&E Framework). This will improve transparency and manage the expectations of stakeholder groups.

- **More frequent multi-channel communication approaches.** Updates on 1AP activities can be delivered more frequently (e.g. short and targeted updates that explain how a particular 1AP activity fits within a bigger picture, monthly spotlights on individual action plan activities and a quarterly implementation progress report to all relevant stakeholders). Governance group members could also be encouraged to distribute communication on the National Strategy to their respective networks.

Recommendation 4: Strengthen governance arrangements among government stakeholders to improve collaboration and accountability mechanisms.

As elaborated in Section 5.3, this evaluation has identified opportunities to improve current governance arrangements to promote two-way information sharing, strengthen accountability mechanisms and promote cross-government collaboration, both at federal and jurisdiction levels. Some examples of steps to strengthen the governance of the National Strategy include:

- **Enhancing jurisdictional input during the design stages of 2AP activities.** The development of co-design protocols during activity design stages will encourage the development of more tailored and locally appropriate reforms. This will also improve stakeholder ownership of reforms.
- **Developing partnership agreements or similar mechanisms** (similar to the National Partnership on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses, the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the Safe and Supported Partnership Agreement) to formalise partnerships, decision-making and collaboration protocols. These partnership agreements could ideally be underpinned by sustained and targeted funding to support implementation. The intent is for these agreements to support improved intergovernmental coordination and collaboration through both reform design and implementation stages. Agreements also typically include performance benchmarks and reporting requirements which will enhance accountability and encourage continual review of implementation progress. These agreements will also help to establish a clear authorising environment that empowers agencies to act decisively and consistently across jurisdictions.
- **Improving collaboration across governments to avoid duplication and strengthen coordination of responses.** Consistent with the ethos of collaboration and realising efficiencies, Activity Leads can also work closely with other government stakeholders (within and outside the Department) who are undertaking similar reforms. It is critical to ensure that future research and scoping activities are better aligned to minimise instances of duplication across future NAP / CAP activities. Government stakeholders also noted some overlap between current 1AP activities and other concurrent reforms in other relevant areas (e.g., gender-based violence and domestic and family violence, child protection, child safety, and justice sectors). To prevent duplication, there should be consideration of potential synergies and points of collaboration (e.g., joint engagement with stakeholder groups to minimise consultation fatigue, pooled funding for reforms which targeted specific stakeholder groups).

Recommendation 5: Establish more consistent and comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms to enable more robust assessments of the degree to which future action plan activities have contributed to medium- and long-term outcomes included in the National Strategy's M&E Framework.

Due to the relatively recent launch of the National Strategy in 2021, this evaluation assessed the implementation progress of the 1AP rather than the extent to which it has achieved its intended outcomes. It is expected that future monitoring and evaluation activities will increasingly focus on the achievement of outcomes as more action plan activities are completed or further progressed. However, robust and consistent program data collection on the action plans and their individual activities are required to enable robust assessments on impacts and outcomes. Consequently, there is a need for the National Office and Activity Leads to prioritise data collection on future National Strategy activities.

The approach to evaluating the effectiveness and impact of National Strategy activities could be more consistent and aligned with the National Strategy's M&E Framework. This can be achieved through:

- **Encouraging the establishment of consistent embedded evaluation approaches across reform activities.** All activities should be required to establish a program logic model, indicators of success and data collection plans. The consistent approach will ensure that evaluation findings and lessons from each activity contributes to system learning.
- **Ensuring the intended outcomes of individual activities are aligned with those included in the overarching M&E Framework.** Activity Leads can consider developing measurable activity-level, system-level and population-level outcomes to demonstrate how government investment in activities have contributed to the achievement of key National Strategy outcomes, including outcomes for children's safety and wellbeing. Data collected on children's wellbeing and safety outcomes should ideally be disaggregated to demonstrate the extent to which the reforms reach those most at risk, such as children in out-of-home care, children with disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- **Integrate the voice of service providers as well as victims and survivors in monitoring and evaluation.** All evaluations can consider adopting participatory evaluation methods to provide opportunity for those with lived experience to provide feedback on the effectiveness of reforms (e.g. in the instance of new services, feedback can be collected on the cultural safety and service quality).
- **Ensuring there is sufficient resourcing to support consistent monitoring and evaluation approaches.** Adequate resourcing, encompassing funding, staffing, and tools, are critical for effectively assessing and monitoring outcomes of child sexual abuse reforms to ensure accountability and continuous improvement. Sufficient funding supports robust data collection and analysis, enabling evaluators to identify trends and measure the effectiveness of implemented strategies. Additionally, tools such as advanced software and databases facilitate efficient data management and sharing among stakeholders, ensuring a cohesive approach to addressing child sexual abuse.
- **Ensuring existing governance arrangements support ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the National Strategy.** Established governance groups such as the Strategic Management Group and Senior Oversight Group can also play a critical role in supporting the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of National Strategy activities. This is consistent with the role of these groups (as articulated in relevant Terms of Reference documentation).
- **Establishing realistic and sufficient timeframes for data collection and stakeholder engagement.** The effectiveness of evaluation activities is dependent on allowing adequate time for meaningful participation, particularly where opt-in approaches are used. Data collection timeframes for future evaluation should therefore be planned with consideration of the operational realities of the not-for-profit and social service sectors, where high service demand and resource limitations can affect the capacity to participate in evaluation activities. Accounting for these constraint in timeframes will support more representative and robust assessments on the effectiveness of the National Strategy.

It is also acknowledged that the National Strategy was developed in response to the Royal Commission (see Section 1.2.1). Future monitoring and evaluation initiatives can more explicitly demonstrate the extent to which the Strategy has progressed in addressing the Royal Commission's recommendations and identify outstanding recommendations that require prioritisation. This will ensure that the remaining gaps are more systematically addressed to strengthen the overall child service system and meet the National Strategy's overall objective of reducing the risk, extent and impact of child sexual abuse in Australia.

Future monitoring and evaluation activities should also incorporate realistic and sufficient timeframes for data collection and stakeholder engagement. The effectiveness of evaluation activities is dependent on allowing adequate time for meaningful participation, particularly where opt-in approaches are used. Data collection timeframes for future evaluation should therefore be planned with consideration of the operational realities of the not-for-profit and social service sectors, where high service demand and resource limitations can affect the capacity to participate in evaluation activities. Accounting for this constraint in timeframes will support more representative and robust assessments on the effectiveness of the National Strategy.

8.2 Recommended activities to be included in 2AP

The recommended activities to be included in 2AP across individual Themes are elaborated in the remaining sub-sections. The evidence base collected as part of this evaluation through semi-structured interviews and surveys had comparatively less evidence on the proposed content for 2AP. Available data notably do not include any content on recommended activities for Theme 4 (Offending prevention and intervention). It is recommended for the National Office to work closely with other stakeholder groups (including all state/territory governments, relevant governance group and non-government

consultative group members) to provide input on the design and implementation of activities to be included in future action plans.

Additionally, most 1AP activities have not been fully implemented. Based on feedback from government stakeholders, focus on completing 1AP activities will likely be prioritised before consideration of future action plan activities (such as those included in the sub-sections below).

8.2.1 Theme 1 (Awareness raising, education and building child safe cultures)

Activities to address community stigma surrounding child sexual abuse: Child sexual abuse remains a highly stigmatised topic for specific parts of the community due to a range of cultural, religious and societal factors. Future action plans can consider the delivery of more consistent and longer-term approaches that involve education, community engagement and broader systemic change initiatives to address stigma around child sexual abuse. Potential activities include education and awareness campaigns that are more consistent and longer term and training for key community members (e.g. religious leaders, teachers, frontline workers) to improve the ability to recognise initial signs of child maltreatment and encourage the collective responsibility of child safety and preventing child sexual abuse. These activities could also embed strategies to reduce the multiple types of barriers to disclosure and discussion on child sexual abuse, including feelings of guilt and shame among victims and survivors, family and cultural factors.

Identify potential place-based approaches (e.g., community champions) to elevate awareness of child sexual abuse and enable greater community support and advocacy towards the National Strategy's key activities: Community champions play a vital role in reducing stigma around child sexual abuse. Trusted and respected individuals – such as peak body representatives, teachers, religious leaders, community leaders, members of sporting teams and victims and survivors themselves – can play an influential role in advocating for child protection and modelling supportive responses. They can also guide people to appropriate resources, such as those developed as part of the National Strategy. One stakeholder suggested for further investment in *“peak bodies for sexual and family violence so they can play a role in supporting all community organisations to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse”*.

8.2.2 Theme 2 (Supporting and empowering victims and survivors)

Expand the delivery of targeted supports to victims and survivors, particularly in instances where there is clear evidence of unmet demand and gaps in service systems. Most 1AP activities which relate to service delivery have not been fully implemented and as such, it is unclear if the scope and scale of these activities can address the needs of victims and survivors. However, this evaluation has confirmed the continued need for targeted supports to victim survivors. One of the activities (CAP 9 – set up an online chat service to deliver free legal assistance services to children and young people) identified staffing capacity constraints which have impacted the ability to directly support all children and young people who requested for legal services. There were also concerns that specific cohorts of children and young people – such as children and young people with disabilities or those in juvenile justice or out-of-home care are unable to access the chat service. This example indicates scope for further data collection to understand the magnitude and nature of unmet demand, and the extent to which ongoing investments in other related 1AP activities would address these gaps. It is also important to consider the optimal resourcing arrangements for these targeted supports. Service delivery functions may require ongoing funding beyond the life of the National Strategy. Ensuring sustainable funding for these activities is critical to maintaining their effectiveness, continuity and credibility over time.

8.2.3 Theme 3 (Enhancing national approaches to children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours)

Identify opportunities to promote usage of developed frameworks and guidelines for understanding, preventing and responding to children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours: A number of 1AP activities focus on developing national frameworks and guidelines to support more consistent and higher quality approaches to supporting children who have displayed with harmful sexual behaviours. Examples include NAP13 (Develop guidelines or national standards for understanding, preventing and responding to children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours) and NAP14 (set up a national clinical and therapeutic framework for responding to children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours). Upon the finalisation of these guidelines and frameworks, non-government consultative group stakeholders indicated scope for the development of training resources and guidance to promote the usage of established frameworks and guidance. The developed resources and guidance are also expected to improve access to high-quality assessment and therapeutic responses and provide support to families and communities, and workforces to meet the needs of children and

young people who display, and those impacted by harmful sexual behaviours. Activities to support the implementation of NAP13 could consider jurisdictional differences in service system arrangements and the varying roles of potential guideline users (e.g. teachers, educators, parents / carers).

To support effective and consistent uptake of developed resources, careful consideration should be given to sequencing activities to ensure that resources are rolled out in a staged and coordinated manner across jurisdictions and service systems. The intended outcomes and expectations for use of the frameworks and guidelines should be articulated and communicated earlier. In addition to the establishment of resources, there needs to be adequate consideration of the level of financial resourcing required to support sustained usage of guidelines and resources over time. For example, workforce training and ongoing reviews on the relevance of resources or frameworks will be important to ensure the frameworks and guidelines remain effective, relevant and trusted within the sector.

8.2.4 Theme 5 (Improving the evidence base)

Several 1AP activities will strengthen the existing base on child sexual abuse such as the second wave of the Australian Child Maltreatment Study, the Australian Child Wellbeing Data Asset and the survey of adult offenders. These studies/datasets will provide a clearer picture of current trends, emerging risk/protective factors as well as the changing dynamics of abuse. Future action plans can leverage insights derived through these studies/datasets. For example, new research might highlight gaps in prevention efforts, the need for culturally adapted interventions, or weaknesses in support services - all of which can be directly addressed in future action plans.

Limitation of our work.

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