



Stories of Impact

*The Protecting and Nurturing Children:
Building Capacity Building Bridges
(BCBB) Initiative*




University of
South Australia

Australian Centre for
Child Protection

Protecting Children is Everyone's Business

National Framework For Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020

A photograph of three young children, two girls and one boy, smiling and standing together. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark blue banner containing the quote.

“We need to build capacity
and strength in our
families and communities,
across the nation.”

National Framework for
Protecting Australia's Children

An initiative of the Council of Australian Governments

The start of the story

The Australian Centre for Child Protection (ACCP) is a national research centre. It's driven by social justice, sustainability and innovation in pursuit of its mission: 'Preventing and responding effectively to child abuse and neglect are our highest priority'.

In 2010, with a grant from the then Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, ACCP developed and delivered Protecting and Nurturing Children: Building Capacity Building Bridges (BCBB) over three years as a key initiative supporting the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020: Protecting Children is Everyone's Business.

Beyond mandatory reporting: protecting children is the collective responsibility of all of our sectors and community members.

The National Framework

The National Framework is the first Australian policy to promote collective responsibility for children's wellbeing. The Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) Framework endorses

the need for everyone across local, state and national agencies, and including the community service sector, to think and act differently. It calls for a shared understanding and a belief that the protection of children is more than 'mandatory reporting'; it is the collective responsibility of all sectors and community members.

BCBB Goals

- To enhance the knowledge and skills of practitioners in child and family focused and adult focused services to support parents to meet the needs of children in their care (building capacity)
- To strengthen collaboration between adult focused and child and family focused services to improve the way that families with multiple needs experience the service system (building bridges)

Transforming the goals of the National Framework into action that made an impact was a key part of the BCBB initiative. By no means an exhaustive list, the following stories illustrate some of the impacts this work has had by influencing strategic focus, community change, organisational development and sustainable learning.

Over 2000 practitioners across Australia

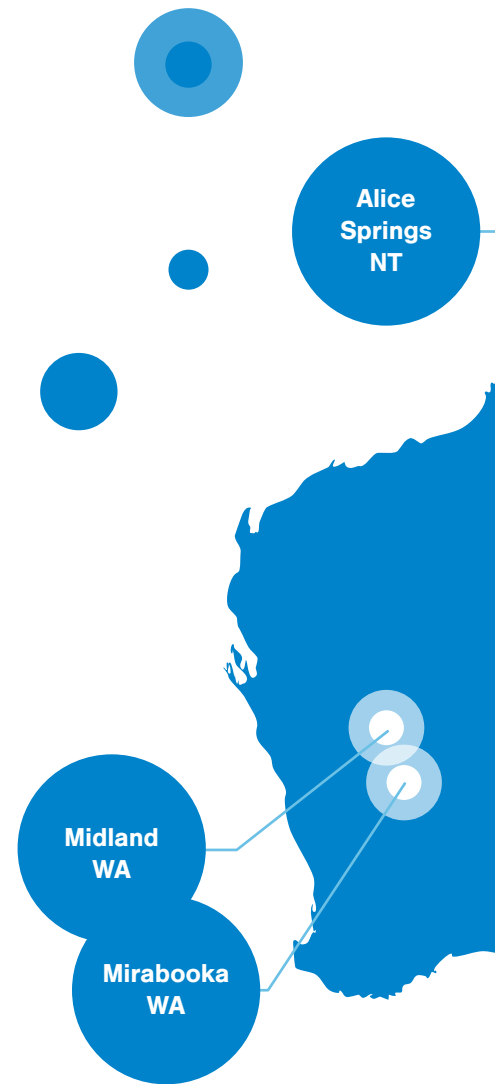
250+
organisations

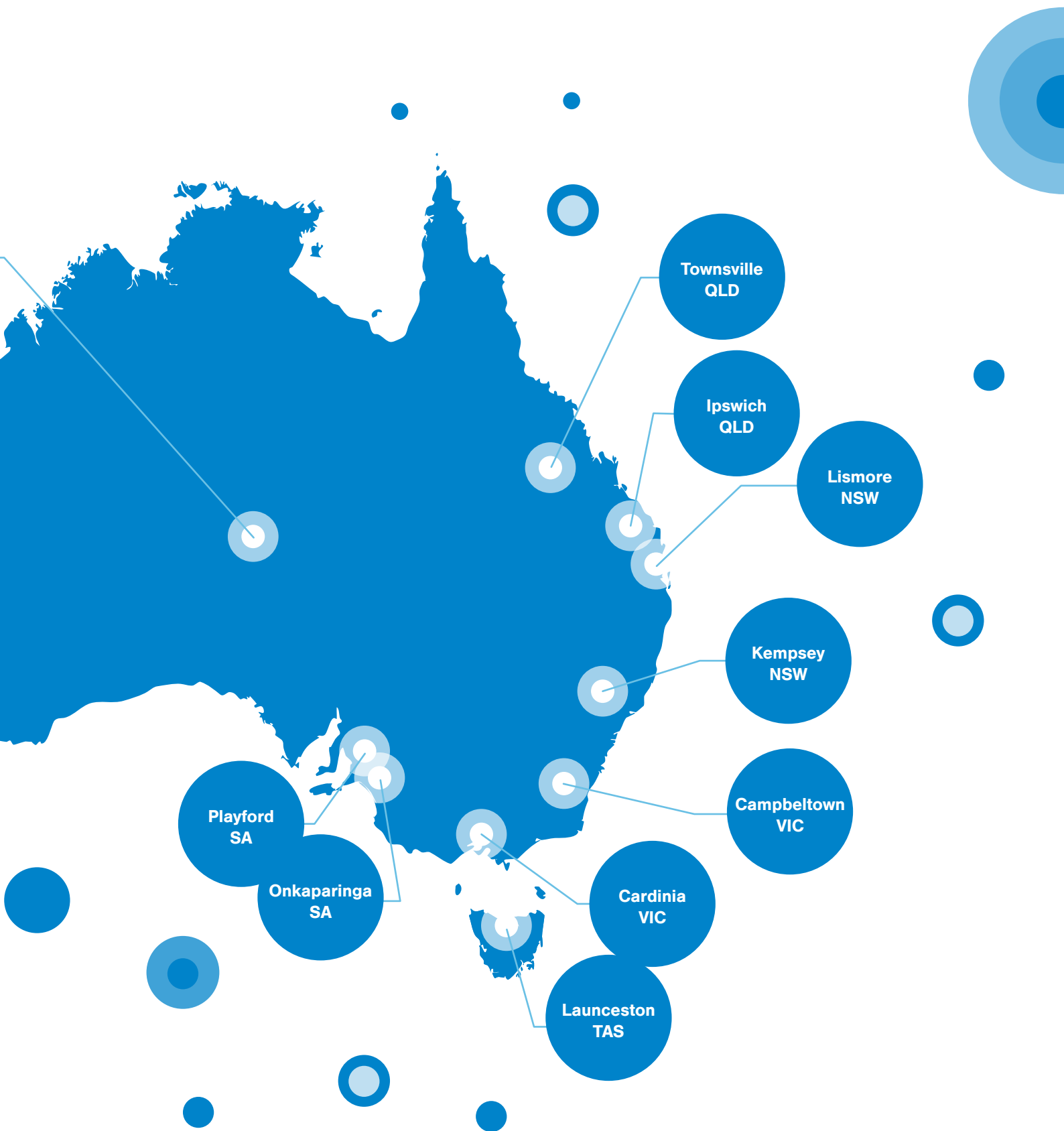
1,000+ copies of
the national framework
distributed

40+
trainers trained

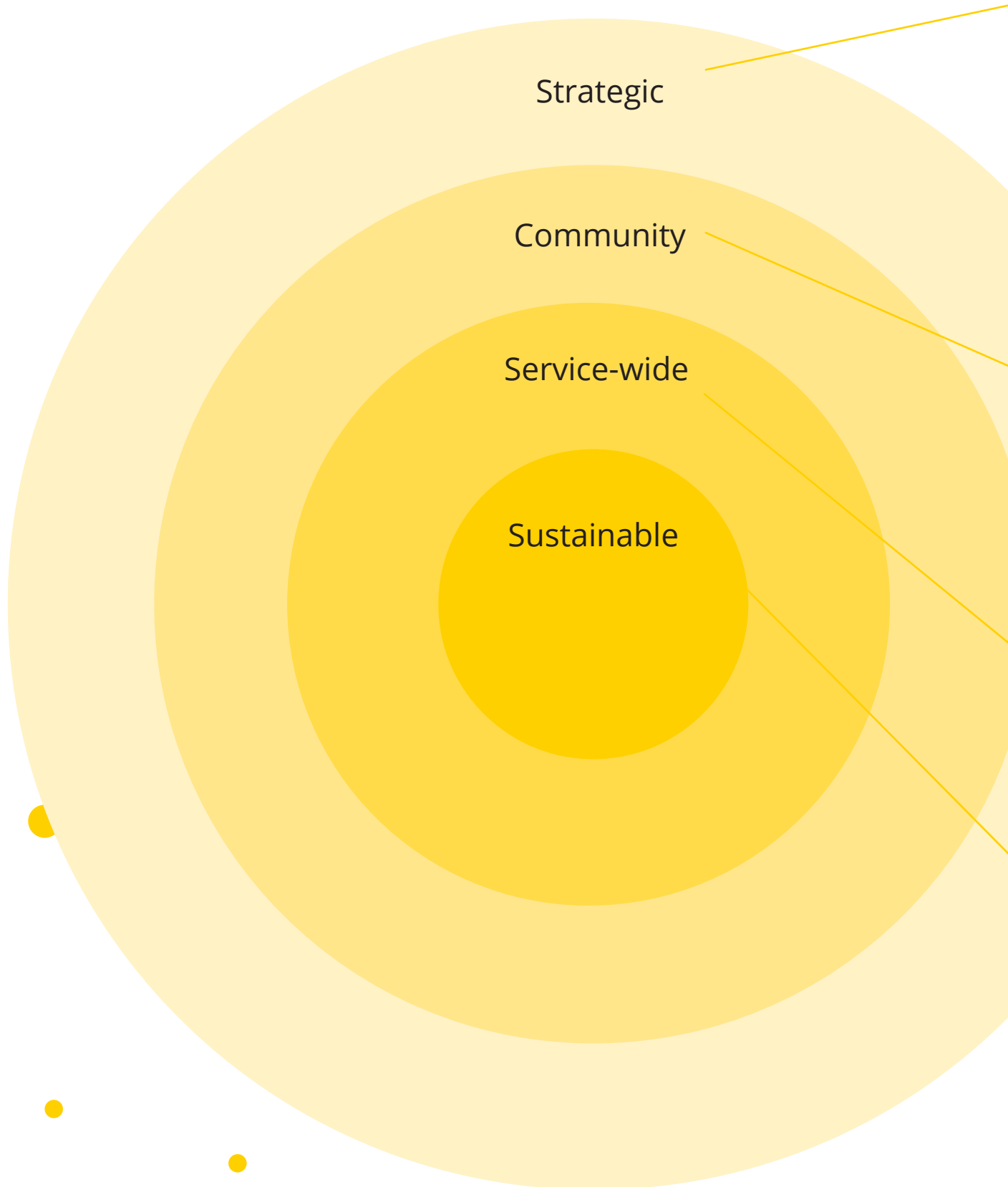
12 community
projects

2 e-learning resources





What was involved?





Strategic

- National Steering Group
Communities for Children partnerships in 12 sites
- Collaboration with each state and territory child protection service
- Conference presentations
- Strategic links and work with other national initiatives: Mental Health Professionals Network (MHPN), Children of Parents with a Mental Illness (COPMI), National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA)

Community

- Community projects
- Relationship building and co-design
- Collaboration workshops
- Learning forums and events with Emeritus Professor Dorothy Scott, Professor Sharon Dawe, Adjunct Professor Dr. Gail Winkworth and Michael White

Service-wide

- Child and family sensitive practice train the trainer courses
- Child and family sensitive practice workshops
- Collaboration workshops (multiple levels)

Sustainable

- Child and family sensitive practice train the trainer courses (multiple levels)
- E-learning
- Community projects



Creating strategic impact

Putting children and parenting needs at the forefront requires a change in attitudes, perceptions and ways of working across all levels of the system. The BCBB national steering group built a bridge to better outcomes for vulnerable children by fostering sector interdependence and providing ‘permission’ to work differently.

A group with a shared goal

The BCBB initiative needed to develop relationships to bring on board both those on the ground and at a strategic level in order to create change. A national steering group chaired by Simon Schrapel, Chief Executive of Uniting Communities was made up of senior people from:

- The homelessness sector
- The Australian National Council on Drugs
- The Mental Health Coalition
- The disability sector
- Families Australia
- The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care
- The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

As well as leading academics and researchers in family violence and child protection

This group was able to harness and learn from what was important across these domains, and understand the different pressures which were driving practice and delivery. The creation of an ‘authorising environment’ was key for all levels of people to have opportunities to learn and agree

that this was important and required their focus. Practitioners needed permission from managers to change their practice, and managers needed direction from leadership that this was the right thing to do.

Listening and trust building was fundamental. What worked was both a top down and bottom up approach. Collaborating at a local level resulted in new actions for practitioners and managers. At the same time the BCBB steering group reviewed change agendas at both state, territory and commonwealth level, and engaged with key bureaucrats about how important this work was.

What worked was both a top down and bottom up approach

Steering group sessions were spent workshoping how to influence policymakers and key decision makers, in order to get child and family sensitive practice embraced and endorsed. As a result, the importance of children and parenting interactions has been formally inserted into tenders, contracts and reporting requirements. As Simon says: “Including children and family focused deliverables in regular reporting in adult services will lead to greater impact”.



It's about being willing to listen deeply to another perspective and learn something that shifts you beyond the narrow confines of your own context.

*-Simon Schrapel,
Chair BBCB Steering Group*

Photo ACOSS CC BY-NC

A lasting impact was building a shared understanding of the barriers and facilitators to collaborative practice.

Collaboration requires a commitment beyond just being happy to work together.

The group believed collaboration required a level of commitment that went beyond the rhetoric of being happy to work together. As Simon shared: “It’s about being willing to listen deeply to another perspective and learn something that shifts you beyond the narrow confines of your own context. It requires courage to be able to look inwards, to let go of what you may have been trained to look for, and hold as ‘true’”.

Collaboration also needs a purpose: “With the BCBB initiative, it was about better practice and outcomes for children by producing something better than what existed before”.

Creating community change

The goal for Protecting and Nurturing Children: Building Capacity, Building Bridges was to take a national policy direction and work in 12 communities to connect it with their specific community vision. In each community, the focus for building capacity and building bridges was different, and the initiative was adapted to fit the context. What emerged were unique ways to meet needs by tapping into the wisdom of local people. Below we learn what happened in two communities.



Lismore, NSW

Leaving a legacy in Lismore

Initially the BCBB initiative brought together people from across different services in a local collaboration workshop. Ollie Heathwood, in her role at the YWCA (the facilitating partner of Lismore Communities for Children), said this revealed a fragmented workforce where workers didn't know about each other: "They said 'even if we did want to help parents and children get to services, we have no idea what's around'. There was little sense of what was out there outside their workplaces".

The challenge in Lismore was to connect one service to another with the goal of putting parenting and vulnerable children in the spotlight. Not just staff; this challenge highlighted the possibility to connect families and the broader

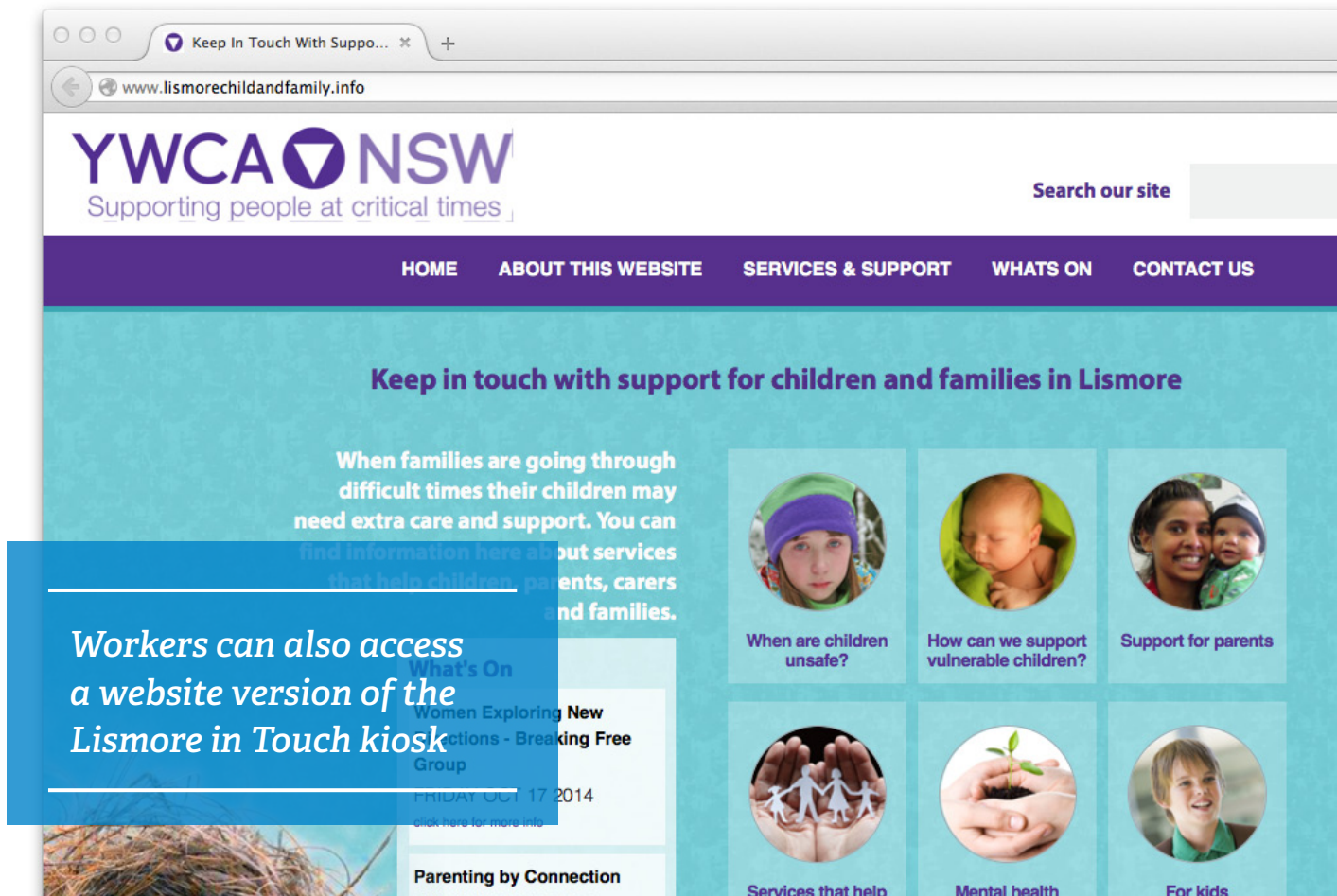
community directly. A website wasn't the answer. Staff said: "We never get anywhere near computers, we're always on our feet". Many families also didn't own, know how to use, or have access to a computer. A directory wouldn't work either, quickly becoming outdated.

The Lismore in Touch kiosk

Embracing this opportunity, and with brokerage support from the BCBB initiative, a set of touchscreen kiosks have now been built with the needs of children and families in mind. They are found in carefully located spots across Lismore - the family law court, the emergency adult mental health unit in the hospital, and the Aboriginal medical centre - where vulnerable family members or busy workers might gather.

A printed directory would too quickly be outdated, but many families didn't have access to a computer

By using a simple-to-use design, people can quickly interact and access information in plain English, in a non-stigmatising way. Through its use of warm, informal language, the kiosk moves beyond being mere communication to something that connects.



The Lismore in Touch kiosks are a lasting legacy of the BCBB initiative, and has the potential to spread to other communities experiencing similar challenges. By bringing the sectors together the community in Lismore now has something that enables practitioners to work differently, and families and children to be more visible and supported.

The two day camp

Relationship-building in this community was also strengthened with a two-day camp in Yamba attended by workers from 35 services across both adult and child and family sectors with Emeritus Professor Dorothy Scott along to support collaborative learning.

A new context was created where relationships based on trust and shared goals developed, and old stereotypes and suspicions were challenged and shifted. Ollie: "The vulnerable child needs a sector where people can pick up the phone and connect with each other. This experience offered us the opportunity to build this so we can all start to see the whole picture".

This experience has led to an increase in referral pathways, more networking opportunities and co-operation between services through strengthening understanding. The YWCA has also changed how it does its planning so that vulnerable children are central, as well as using this process as a way to strengthen relationships by inviting other services to take part and learn together with them.



Alice springs

Tackling the challenges of the transient workforce in Alice Springs

How do you deal with a regular influx of new people and people leaving Alice Springs, which attracts a transient workforce? This issue impacted many services, and was particularly pertinent to the child protection workforce.

Caroline Lovell from the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress stated: “High case-loads leads to workers burning out very quickly. It’s (child protective service) challenged by high turnover of staff and unfilled positions”.

New child protection case workers were seen as being thrust into the thick of crisis intervention with little opportunity to understand how to work better together with other service providers.

Settled workers also battled a growing sense of ‘investment fatigue’, from their repeated efforts of bringing on board new workers who stayed in their roles for only a short time. This made people question whether it was worth continuing to invest their energies.

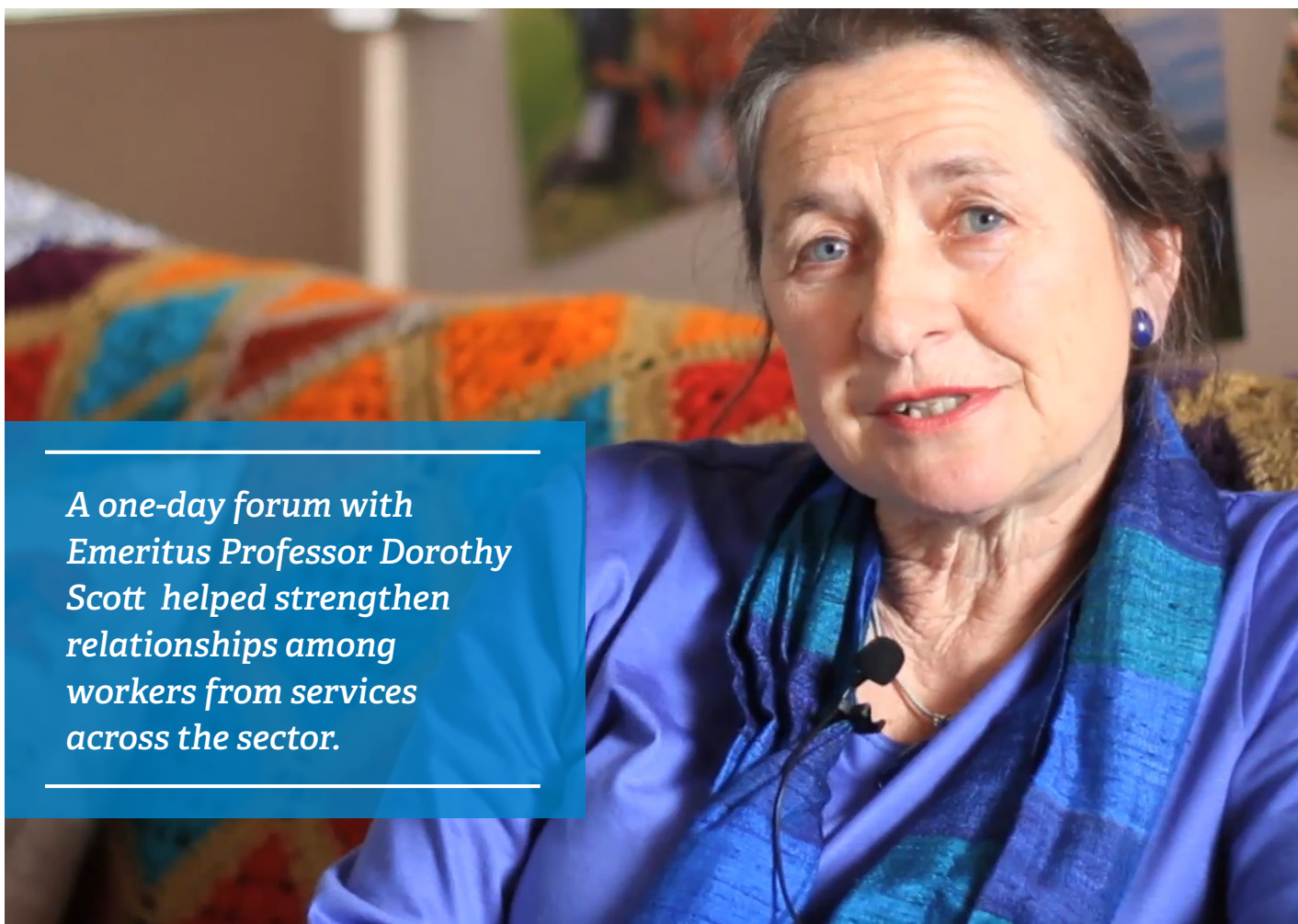
Being part of the BCBB collaboration and child and family sensitive practice workshops provided momentum and support to consider how to respond to this ongoing, critical problem. A local team was formed and given brokerage support by BCBB to address this issue.

Annual cross-sector orientation session

What resulted was an annual cross-sector orientation session designed as a day-long event to provide a snapshot of the services in the area, and so workers, new and old, could mix and learn with each other. In the afternoon small groups work together on real case studies, to embed knowledge of how local services could be useful and relevant in different scenarios.

In the two years the orientation has run, the feedback has been really positive. As well as offering an introduction to the community, it’s resulted in improved referral pathways. Participants state they feel more capable to assist families and children with their broader knowledge of what’s available. The team plan to build on their success by including more adult-focused services, and making the experience more interactive.

Support from the BCBB enabled this work, and the team are grateful for the ‘scaffolding’ this provided. As Robyn Donnelly, from Relationships Australia, shared: “It worked that BCBB were prepared listen to us say: ‘Look, here’s the real need, from local information, and local people saying how we think we can best develop more collaborative practice. And in Alice Springs, it’s about having good induction orientation’. BCBB was flexible in its approach and saw it as a great way to partner us in delivering these events, so it was a really useful initiative”.



A one-day forum with Emeritus Professor Dorothy Scott helped strengthen relationships among workers from services across the sector.

Learning forum

The community's ambitions didn't stop there. The BCBB initiative also provided a learning forum hosted by Emeritus Professor Dorothy Scott on ways to develop collaborative practice across the community sector. Both people from adult focused and child and family services made up the 100+ attendees. They reported feeling more confident and able to work collaboratively as a result of this experience.

Nina Levin, from Anglicare, the auspicing agency of Communities for Children in Alice Springs says both the response to and the positive ripple effect from this event has been fantastic: "It has served to highlight the importance of keeping children at the centre, to understand vulnerability, and around the need for a better co-ordinated approach. So we no longer mirror a family's chaos".

Creating service-wide impact

The child and family sensitive practice workshops provided an opportunity for both child and family focused and adult focused services to learn and reflect. Participants were enabled to explore beyond their role boundaries, and see through each other's eyes building an appreciation of what drives their differences, and what unites them. This process opened up different kinds of conversations and exploratory practice allowing people to consider a more holistic way of working across sectors by making children and their families central.

Creating champions

BCBB child and family sensitive practice and collaboration workshops and other learning opportunities supported great people to do great work by equipping them with new ways to influence practice between adult and child and family focused services within their local area. Three BCBB champions demonstrate how they share their new knowledge and skills across Australia.

As a team leader I found it extremely important. It was a fantastic training; I would describe it as profound.

Jody Sachs, Team Leader Intensive Tenancy Support, Red Cross South Australia

Australian Red Cross has 60,000 members and volunteers whose humanitarian mission is to improve lives and reduce vulnerability. The BCBB team worked with Red Cross National Coordinator for Families and Children to pilot a two-day child and family sensitive practice workshop with 20 people from across the organisation with the aim of sparking an increase in child and family sensitive practice.

“As a team leader I found it extremely important. It was a fantastic training; I would describe it as profound.

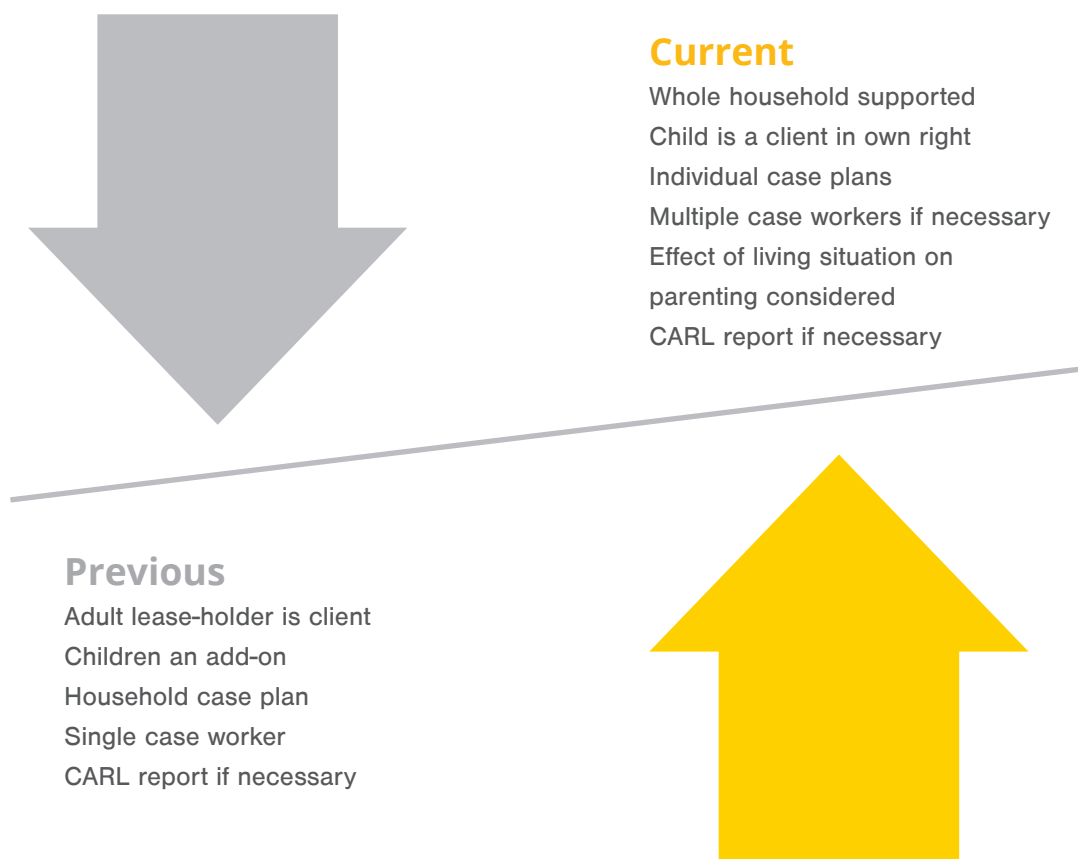
Red Cross already does mandatory notification but it seemed only programs directly interfacing with children used child sensitive practice.

In tenancy support services the key clients are adults but for us working in outreach, travelling to homes, we see children as well. The workshop made us think further about what our role is with every single person who lives in that tenancy. It reshaped the way our program thinks and acts and does.

Now, parenting has become one of the key things we look at. We examine what effect coming close to eviction has on children and what we can do to make sure that children's needs are being met throughout the crisis and beyond. We not only try to strengthen parents' abilities we also highlight how others may be affected by their behaviour.

Impact in a tenancy support service

Jody Sachs provided this diagram to represent the change that she saw in her tenancy support service as a result of the training.



We learnt from the workshop how to have those discussions in a sensitive way.

Now we schedule visits when children are home from school so we see how parents interact with their children and, if possible, bring children into the conversation. We have found this to be powerful as parents start seeing their kids as part of the solution.

The workshop has changed the way I work. As a leader I've been able to influence the team. Now about 98% of the conversations we have

before we visit families concern the welfare of any children within that family. We frequently rehearse conversations and practice scenarios to prepare us to talk to adults about their child's needs and concerns".

*Fadzi Mutambiranwa Diversity Consultant,
CommunityWest, WA*

Fadzi works for CommunityWest, a not-for profit organisation with over 20 years' experience working alongside service providers in the home and community care sector. She's been able to apply what she learned through the BBCB workshops in the committees she sits on. While she acknowledges limitations, she's finding opportunities to share learning and change practice.

"I have been able to use the knowledge from the training in committees. The big learning for me was being mindful on creating more holistic service delivery methods when dealing with clients.

I have pushed the need to create more partnerships and collaborations with other sectors outside our own so that we can better identify the needs of clients and their families. I think this is something that I took away from the training especially as a way of building bridges with others. I'm actively looking for opportunities to work more directly within the child and family services sector".

Train the trainer: investing in ongoing learning
*Amanda Kemperman, Community Development -
Systems Enhancement Communities for Children,
Onkaparinga SA*

A central purpose of the work was to build capacity in facilitating child and family sensitive practice learning beyond the life of the BCBB initiative. The BCBB team invited over 40 practitioners to take part in a two-day child and family sensitive practice train the trainer course. It's an investment that has enabled an effective way to sustain the impact of the BCBB initiative across Australia.

Amanda Kemperman took part in this training as her role is a combination of building capacity and building bridges at a local level in Onkaparinga SA, with a particular focus on connecting adult focused services with child and family services.

The training provided Amanda with momentum and a mechanism for engaging services and agencies to come together to address the issue of keeping children safe. She's also taken the key messages into a number of local forums. "It's given me a way to support workers to put children in the picture when they weren't previously visible and consider the impact and their actions".

She's using the training in her role to deliver learning programs and events with the aim of prioritising children's voices and to ensure 'child protection is everyone's business' across the sector.

*It's given me a way to
support workers to put
children in the picture
when they weren't
previously visible.*

As a trained deliverer of child and family sensitive practice workshops Amanda is helping to provide workshops to services such as Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia, South Australian Network of Drug and Alcohol Services, Relationships Australia 'Together for Kids' program and to SA Health mental health workers.

Creating service-wide impact

Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia (DASSA) is a statewide health service that offers a range of prevention, treatment and education services for all South Australians.

A significant number of DASSA staff eventually participated in the BCBB child and family sensitive practice workshop, and two were invited to participate in the child and family sensitive practice train the trainer workshop.

Around this time DASSA was entering a period of considerable reflection following an external audit report which identified areas where change was needed, and also NCETA's Family Sensitive Policy and Practice Toolkit had been released. The resulting adoption of a Model of Care meant that the time was opportune to embed a child and family sensitive approach across the service.

Karen Abraham, as a member of the Clinical Executive of DASSA, supported the incorporation into the related Action Plan asking questions about children on assessment forms. She also proposed that all staff receive in-house child and family sensitive practice training from her and her train the trainer colleague.

This proposal for mandatory training for all DASSA staff was supported by the Directors. It was also agreed that DASSA Managers receive training regarding Child Aware Supervision. There are now also child-friendly places within DASSA offices where clients are seen.

In spite of a change in position, Karen has been allowed to maintain her role as a child and family sensitive practice Trainer and is now working with another Trainer from a non-government agency. This partnership is building further cross-pollination of information and ideas that supports child and family sensitive practice.

Creating sustainable impact

In order to increase the breadth and depth of impact, the BCBB initiative worked to enable awareness and learning to continue to grow even after the project finished.

Reflective learning, any time

Lasting impact can happen when three national initiatives collaborate to join up the dots to build better practice and scaffold learning.

The BCBB initiative, together with COPMI* and NCETA*, are national initiatives based in Adelaide. They share similar aims and principles around improving the capacity of services to be responsive to children's needs. Seeing the connections between addiction, mental illness and protecting children as co-occurring in family life, they came together to learn from and utilise each other's collective wisdom in order to create something useful together.

Feedback from the BCBB workshops highlighted a big gap for practitioners; they were not getting

space for reflective practice, particularly about child aware practice. Together the three initiatives applied for a grant which, with brokerage support from BCBB, allowed them to develop content for an e-learning resource for managers with a focus on improving child aware supervision skills.

Feedback from BCBB workshops highlighted a gap for practitioners: they were not getting space for reflective practice, particularly about child aware practice.

* **COPMI: Children of Parents with a Mental Illness** is a national initiative which promotes better outcomes for children of parents with a mental illness.

* **NCETA: the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction** is an internationally recognised research centre that works as a catalyst for change in the alcohol and other drugs field.

Working together allowed them to step outside their usual spaces and enter new areas together with people with lived experience who were a valuable part of the team. The content was also drawn from joint experience and informed by both the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children and research by the Australian Centre for Child Protection (ACCP).

COPMI
Children of Parents with a Mental Illness

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[Home](#) > [Professionals](#) > eLearning > 'Child Aware Supervision'

'Child Aware Supervision' - eLearning course

Support your staff to support kids and families...

Already Registered?

[Login here](#)

About the course

The Child Aware Supervision elearning course provides training for supervisors in strategies that promote child and family-sensitive practices in their service.

Why use it?

- It's designed specifically to support supervisors

Supervisors in adult-focused health and social services (eg. mental health, drug and alcohol, domestic violence, housing etc)

Monthly Emails

Subscribe to monthly updates and keep up to date with COPMI's latest events, general news...

This resulted in the development of an engaging e-learning resource, Child Aware Supervision, which anyone can log into for free and learn from. It's specifically relevant for supervisors to support their staff to reflect on their practice with children and parents. It offers practical strategies for having conversations with parents.

So far people accessing the content report that it's incredibly useful in building skills and addressing barriers to good practice. The mental health department in Queensland has embedded

it into their training around what makes good supervision.

For COPMI and ACCP, this collaboration marked the start of working together. They continue to work on new e-learning modules to influence learning across different levels of understanding. One is aimed at practitioners using storytelling to focus and change practice around the 'invisible child'. Another in development is designed to support boards and senior leaders in organisations to incorporate child and family thinking.



Australian Centre for
Child Protection

Protecting and Nurturing Children:
Building Capacity Building Bridges

Child and Family Sensitive Practice Training Manual

*With the support of Dr
Carole Zufferey of UniSA,
a master class was held
about about child and
family sensitive practice*

Impacting education

This unique BCBB initiative used every opportunity to make children visible including an existing relationship with Dr Carole Zufferey of the University of South Australia's School of Psychology, Social Work, and Social Policy. With her support, a master class about child and family sensitive practice was held for postgraduate Social Work students at the University.

This sparked Dr Zufferey's interest in the resources and learning methods used and led her to attend the child and family sensitive practice train the trainer course in SA. Dr Zufferey has applied her learning in different ways:

Impact on course content

"I applied the knowledge from the train the trainer workshop and expanded on it, using case studies as concrete examples. I think I was the only academic there among practitioners; the role of the academic is obviously useful in learning and being able to spread those ideas".

Impact on student learning

"I was fortunate enough to have professional BCBB staff from the Centre to come and talk with my students. The course I taught had 80 students. Now they are becoming aware of the complexities of practice and the whole message around generalist services being better focused on children".

Impact on next generation of Social Work graduates

"Imparting that knowledge to students means that when they go to placements and practice they will use this knowledge to be better Social Workers – it has a ripple effect".

Thank you

Thank you to all 2000+ collaborators in the Protecting and Nurturing Children: Building Capacity Building Bridges initiative who are continuing to influence their practice, workplaces and communities, to ultimately improve outcomes for children and their families.

Thank you to The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) for collecting and presenting these stories of impact.

We would also like to acknowledge funding from the Department of Social Services for making this work possible.



“

In most communities this has been the first opportunity for child and family services and adult focused services to come together in the spirit of learning; to build the knowledge base in a community to enhance responses for vulnerable children and their families. I thank all those involved for their contribution and commitment to this collective journey.

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Helen Francis, Project Manager,
Protecting and Nurturing Children:
Building Capacity, Building Bridges.



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The Australian Centre for Child Protection (ACCP)

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