Submission to the Safe and Supported Second Action Plans 2027–2031 Discussion Paper

Building a nationally coordinated, locally delivered system that works for all children and young people

Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia

September 2026

29 September 2026

Safe and Supported Secretariat
Department of Social Services

Re: Safe and Supported Second Action Plans 2027–2031 Discussion Paper

The Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia (MYAN) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Safe and Supported Discussion Paper and contribute to the development of the Second Action Plans.

MYAN supports the National Framework's commitment to prevention, participation, cultural responsiveness and children's rights. The Second Action Plans provide an important opportunity to translate these commitments into coordinated implementation, measurable outcomes and clear accountability, including earlier intervention, safe responses, recovery and long-term wellbeing.

Multicultural children and young people are a mainstream and growing part of Australia's child and youth population. Their experiences across education, settlement, mental health, family support, safety, social cohesion and community participation show whether universal systems provide equitable access, culturally responsive support and effective pathways across service boundaries.

MYAN encourages the Second Action Plans to establish a nationally coordinated and locally delivered system with clear cross-portfolio responsibilities, meaningful participation, culturally responsive practice and sustained investment. Peak bodies and intermediary organisations should be recognised for their role in connecting evidence, communities, young people, services and government and identifying system gaps that are not visible within individual programs or portfolios.

We appreciate the opportunity to contribute and would welcome continued engagement as the Second Action Plans are developed and implemented.

For any further conversations please contact National Manager, Rana Ebrahimi via 0498437380 or rana@myan.org.au.

Yours sincerely,

Rana Ebrahimi
National Manager
Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia

About MYAN

The Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia (MYAN) is the national peak body representing the rights and interests of children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Australia.

MYAN works alongside young people, communities, service providers, researchers and governments to strengthen policy, systems and practice affecting multicultural children and young people. Our work spans youth settlement, social cohesion, participation, education, employment, safety, wellbeing and inclusion.

MYAN's contribution to this consultation draws on direct engagement with children and young people, families, community organisations, researchers, service providers and governments across Australia, together with evidence generated through MYAN's policy, advocacy and research activities.

Acknowledgement of Country

MYAN acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live, work, and learn and pays respect to Elders past and present.

We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have cared for children, young people, families and communities for thousands of generations and continue to hold knowledge, leadership and strengths that are critical to improving outcomes for all children and young people.

MYAN supports the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to self-determination, culture, and connection to Country and community, and recognises the importance of Aboriginal-led solutions in creating safe, supported, and thriving futures.

Executive summary

The Second Action Plans provide an opportunity to move from recognition to implementation by establishing a nationally coordinated, locally delivered system for prevention, early intervention, safe response and recovery. Children and young people must be treated as rights holders whose safety, wellbeing, participation and development shape policy, funding, service delivery and accountability.

MYAN recommends that the Plans make multicultural children and young people visible across every priority; establish shared cross-portfolio outcomes and referral responsibilities; invest in culturally responsive workforce and specialist capability; embed safe participation; and require disaggregated data, public reporting and independent system-level oversight.

MYAN's submission focuses on ensuring that multicultural children and young people are visible within this reform. They are a mainstream part of Australia's child and youth population but can remain poorly recognised in universal systems and fall between settlement, education, health, family support and child safety services. Cultural responsiveness must therefore be embedded from the outset rather than added after systems and programs have been designed.

MYAN's Recommendations

1. Recognise multicultural children and young people as a mainstream national cohort, visible across all priorities, indicators, funding models and accountability frameworks.

2. Prioritise prevention and early intervention, particularly during the transition years from 6 to 12, which remain a significant developmental, policy and service gap.
3. Build a nationally coordinated and locally delivered system, supported by shared accountability, formal referral infrastructure, clear roles and ecosystem stewardship.
4. Strengthen cultural safety and embed cultural intelligence, anti-racist practice, racial literacy and relational capability across the workforce.
5. Embed meaningful and safe participation in policy, implementation, governance, monitoring and evaluation.
6. Strengthen implementation and accountability architecture, including shared outcomes, Child Rights Impact Assessments, disaggregated data, public reporting and independent ecosystem-level intelligence.

Main recommendation

The Second Action Plans should establish a nationally coordinated and locally delivered child and family system organised around children's rights, developmental journeys and everyday service pathways. Its operating foundations should include shared outcomes, formal referral and escalation processes, clear cross-portfolio responsibilities, culturally intelligent workforce standards, meaningful and safe participation, disaggregated data, transparent reporting and funded ecosystem stewardship.

Multicultural children and young people: a mainstream cohort with distinct system needs

Australia's multicultural child and youth population is not a small or temporary cohort. MYAN's 2026 Commissioner discussion paper notes that children aged 0–12 and young people aged 12–24 together accounted for almost half of arrivals across the Humanitarian, Family and Skilled migration streams in 2024–25. This population measure reinforces the need to treat multicultural children and young people as a mainstream national policy cohort, with cultural responsiveness built into system design, funding, service delivery, workforce capability, data and accountability from the outset.[1]

Children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds experience settlement differently from adults because of their developmental stage, roles within families and communities, education transitions and the simultaneous task of building identity and belonging. MYAN's settlement work consistently describes these young people as resilient and capable, while also identifying the need for targeted support to ensure they can access their rights, opportunities and services.[2]

A child-rights approach must therefore hold equity and agency together. Children and young people may experience an equity deficit because systems do not provide equal access, voice, cultural safety or opportunity. At the same time, they are rights holders, leaders, co-designers and active contributors whose knowledge should shape prevention, service design, implementation and accountability.[3]

[1] MYAN and 54 Reasons. (2026) Multicultural children and young people in Australia: National challenges, opportunities and system reform priorities, section 1.
[2] Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia (MYAN) (2022) Submission to discussion paper: Next steps to improve Australia's settlement and integration of refugees, pp. 3–4
[3] MYAN (2026) MYAN submission to the Second Action Plan, executive summary and cross-cutting reform priorities.

The population is also diverse across migration pathway, age, gender, visa status, language, disability, geography and generational depth. Second-generation young people can be overlooked because they are outside settlement eligibility, yet MYAN's identity research finds that second-generation multicultural youth can carry a substantial cultural load and are the most disconnected from formal programs designed to support multicultural young people. This is a significant blind spot for both mainstream and settlement systems.[4]

Belonging and identity are not secondary outcomes. MYAN research describes identity negotiation as a central part of settling and growing up in Australia, shaped by family, peers, schools, racism and whether a young person's Australian identity is accepted by others. Services that focus only on participation or crisis response can miss the deeper conditions that support long-term wellbeing, trust and social connection.[5]

From recognition to implementation

Evidence from Safe and Supported processes, Children's Commissioners, MYAN's consultations and research, and the 54 reasons submission points to a consistent implementation challenge: governments have received extensive evidence and recommendations, but delivery remains fragmented across portfolios, jurisdictions and service systems.

The Second Action Plans should establish the practical architecture for sustained change. This includes clear governance, shared cross-portfolio outcomes, formal referral and escalation pathways, culturally responsive workforce capability, safe participation, long-term investment and transparent reporting.

Success should be assessed through children's and families' experiences of earlier support, safety, trust, continuity, cultural responsiveness and recovery, rather than through activity measures alone.

Question 1

What would make the biggest difference in helping children, young people and families get the right support early, before concerns escalate?

The strongest opportunity for reform is to shift from a crisis-oriented system to one that gives prevention and early intervention equal priority. Children should not need to become visible through serious harm, child protection involvement, homelessness, justice contact or acute mental health concerns before support becomes available. Current spending and system attention remain concentrated at the crisis end, reinforcing the need for earlier, accessible support.

Newly arrived, refugee, migrant and multicultural children and families must be explicitly included in early intervention. Young people can experience difficult transitions when intensive settlement support ends, particularly where there is no coordinated plan linking on-arrival support, settlement services and mainstream systems. MYAN is concerned that ineffective or unsupported referrals can lead to disengagement, poor service

[4] MYAN and Social Policy Group (SPG) (2026) Belonging Within and Across Cultures: Exploring Multicultural Youth Identity in Australia, interim findings, pp. 2–4.
[5] MYAN and SPG (2026), pp. 7–9; MYAN (2018), pp. 3–4.

use and young people falling through service gaps. Second-generation children and young people may be outside settlement eligibility while still navigating intergenerational pressures, racism, identity, belonging and unequal access to culturally responsive services.

The transition years from approximately 6 to 12 require dedicated attention. This is a critical period for school engagement, language development, identity, peer belonging and family adjustment, but it falls between early childhood and youth service systems. The National Children's Commissioner roundtable identified the middle years as a practical shared priority, and the joint MYAN and 54 reasons discussion paper describes this period as a major national gap.

Early support should be available through the places where children and families already live, learn and connect. For multicultural families, this includes schools, settlement organisations, community hubs, cultural and faith organisations, health services, sport and youth settings. These trusted settings should be treated as core parts of the early intervention ecosystem, not supplementary pathways.

Early intervention should be youth-centred and family-aware. MYAN's settlement consultations identify family relationships as a key protective factor and note that different rates of language acquisition and acculturation, unfamiliar systems, financial stress and changing expectations can place pressure on family relationships. Supporting parents and carers to understand schools, youth services and children's developmental needs can strengthen early intervention without treating children simply as extensions of adults.

A warm referral is valuable, but it is not a system. A referral should not end with contact details or another waitlist. Responsibility should remain with the system until access is confirmed, support is received and the child or family understands the next step.

MYAN proposes a nationally consistent wraparound approach based on three connected principles:

No Wrong Door, No Wrong Person and No Lost Referral.

No Wrong Door means that wherever a child, young person or family first seeks help, including through a school, health service, settlement organisation, youth worker, multicultural organisation or community setting, they receive a safe response and connection to appropriate support.

No Wrong Person means that trusted people are equipped and supported to recognise concerns, respond appropriately and help navigate the service system.

No Lost Referral means that responsibility remains with services: referrals are warm, coordinated and followed through until access is confirmed, support is received and the child or family understands the next step. Together, these principles shift the burden of navigating fragmented systems away from children and families and establish shared responsibility for continuity of care.

Early intervention systems should recognise children and young people as potential victim-survivors in their own right, including where violence or harm is directed primarily towards a parent or carer. They should provide developmentally appropriate opportunities for children to disclose concerns safely and access support early, without relying solely on an adult's engagement with a service.

Prevention and early intervention must also include developmentally appropriate responses for children and young people who use violence or display harmful sexual behaviours. Responses should combine accountability and safety with therapeutic and behaviour-change support, family engagement where safe, culturally responsive assessment, continuity in education and appropriate specialist intervention. Multicultural young people should not be subject to either under-identification of risk or racialised over-identification as perpetrators. Responses should address individual circumstances and drivers of behaviour without attributing violence to culture or migration background.

Prevention should also address risks emerging through digital environments, including technology-facilitated abuse, online sexual exploitation, harmful content and online racism. Multilingual and culturally relevant education should be co-designed with children, young people, families and communities and delivered through schools, settlement services and other trusted settings.

Recommendations

- Embed a dedicated middle-years priority, covering approximately ages 6–12, within national child wellbeing and safety reform. This should be supported by cross-portfolio investment, measurable outcomes and accountability across education, health, mental health, settlement, family support and participation.
- Recognise newly arrived, refugee, migrant and multicultural children and young people as an explicit priority cohort across prevention and early intervention, while also embedding their needs across universal services.
- Provide a layered service offer comprising culturally responsive universal services; tailored primary support for multicultural children and families; and specialist multicultural or cultural services where additional expertise, trust, community relationships or language capability is required.
- Establish a Commonwealth-supported, community-connected universal family support platform that is non-stigmatising, culturally responsive and able to link families to mental health, family violence, settlement, education and practical supports.
- Create formal referral and navigation standards based on No Wrong Door, No Wrong Person and No Lost Referral, including responsibility for follow-up and confirmed connection to support.
- Build child outcomes into settlement, early intervention and family support contracts, procurement, commissioning and performance reporting.
- Invest in trusted local access points and community connectors, including in regional and remote locations, while maintaining nationally consistent expectations for quality and access.
- Strengthen culturally safe and developmentally appropriate disclosure pathways through schools, health services, settlement organisations, multicultural organisations, youth services and other trusted community settings.
- Include multilingual and culturally responsive education on digital safety, technology-facilitated abuse, online child sexual exploitation, harmful online content, consent and respectful relationships.
- Invest in family-based prevention and early intervention that supports communication across generations while maintaining the independent rights, safety and voice of the child.
- Ensure that children and young people affected by violence are recognised and supported as victim-survivors in their own right.

Question 2

How can child and family services work better together with health, education, disability, housing, justice and family violence services?

The system remains fragmented and organised around institutional, program and funding boundaries rather than children's experiences. Children move across education, health, settlement, housing, disability, family

support, child protection, justice and community systems, yet responsibilities and accountability are dispersed.[6]

The need for coordination is already established. The priority now is to create structures that make coordination routine, transparent and sustainable. A nationally coordinated and locally delivered model would support consistent rights, standards and outcomes while allowing responses to reflect local context, population and service capacity.

Systematic, registered organisational relationships are needed for referral and collaboration. The ecosystem requires a clear map of services, roles, responsibilities, eligibility, entry points and escalation pathways. This is particularly important in places such as Alice Springs and the Northern Territory, where mainstream, Aboriginal-controlled and multicultural services need stronger practical connections and where workforce and service capacity can be limited.[7]

Cross-departmental coordination is essential. Safe and Supported cannot deliver integrated outcomes if health, education, housing, settlement, justice, disability and family violence systems continue to plan, fund and evaluate separately. Child outcomes should be shared across portfolios and reflected in government agreements and commissioning.

For multicultural children and young people, cross-portfolio implementation must include social services, health, education, housing, justice, disability, family violence, and settlement and migration systems. In particular, DSS, Health, Education and Home Affairs should have defined responsibilities for shared outcomes, referral pathways, workforce capability, data visibility and continuity between settlement and mainstream services. State and territory systems should be engaged through corresponding place-based implementation mechanisms.

Effective implementation also requires organisations whose role extends beyond direct service delivery. Peak bodies and intermediary organisations work across communities, sectors and jurisdictions. They can convene diverse perspectives, translate evidence, identify emerging gaps, support participation and provide system intelligence that individual providers, researchers or departments cannot produce alone.[8]

Dedicated seed funding should support independent, peak coordinated ecosystem development, including mapping, convening, participation, referral architecture, common tools and initial evaluation design. To protect independence and public value, this funding should be separate from direct service contracts, time-limited where appropriate, competitively or transparently allocated, and governed through published deliverables, shared oversight and public reporting.[9]

Cultural capability cannot substitute for specialist multicultural infrastructure. Mainstream services should build cultural intelligence while maintaining routine access to specialist multicultural youth organisations, bicultural and bilingual workers, interpreters, cultural brokers and trusted community relationships. Specialist capability should be integrated into system design and referral pathways rather than accessed only after mainstream responses have failed.

Service integration must include recovery as well as referral and crisis response. For children and young people, recovery may involve stable housing, continuity in education, culturally responsive mental health care,

[6] Department of Social Services (2021), system coordination and accountability sections; Australian Human Rights Commission (2026), p. 10; MYAN and 54 reasons (2026), pp. 99–101.
[7] MYAN (2026), Submission to the Second Action Plan, pp. 2–3; MYAN (2026), Submission to the Second Action Plan, section 7.
[8] MYAN (2026), Submission on the Department of Social Services' Relational Commissioning Approach; MYAN and 54 reasons (2026), pp. 92–101; MYAN (2026), Submission to the Second Action Plan, pp. 1–2.
[9] MYAN (2026), Submission on the Department of Social Services' Relational Commissioning Approach Submission on the Department of Social Services' relational commissioning approach; MYAN (2022), pp. 4–7.

rebuilding trusted relationships, family and community connection, and restoring identity and belonging. Responsibility should not end when an immediate risk has been addressed.

Children and families can avoid services where they fear immigration, child protection or other legal consequences. Better coordination requires clear and translated information about confidentiality, information sharing, mandatory reporting and referral processes, together with safeguards that enable children and families to seek support without immigration status becoming a barrier to safety. These measures are necessary to build trust, support early help-seeking and prevent families from disengaging between service systems.

Recommendations

- Establish formal national cross-portfolio governance for children's wellbeing, safety and rights, with defined responsibilities across social services, health, education, housing, settlement, disability and justice.
- Develop and maintain a national child and family ecosystem map, supported by locally tailored directories, referral protocols and registered organisational relationships.
- Define the respective roles and accountabilities of universal services, specialist services, community organisations, peak bodies, researchers, commissioners and government agencies.
- Develop a nationally agreed Child and Youth Outcomes Framework that aligns Safe and Supported with other relevant national plans and strategies and includes shared public reporting obligations.
- Embed common child outcomes and referral responsibilities in procurement, commissioning, grants and service agreements.
- Provide dedicated seed and enabling funding to independent peak bodies and intermediary organisations for ecosystem mapping, convening, participation infrastructure, policy translation, referral architecture and system learning. This funding should be distinct from direct service delivery funding and governed by clear public-interest outcomes, milestones and accountability.
- Require place-based implementation plans in regional and remote areas, including practical mechanisms connecting Aboriginal-controlled, multicultural, mainstream and specialist services.
- Establish integrated recovery pathways connecting child and family services with education, housing, mental health, settlement, legal assistance and specialist violence services.
- Require service systems to provide clear, accessible and translated information about confidentiality, information sharing, mandatory reporting, eligibility and referral processes.
- Develop safeguards so that immigration status does not prevent children and families from seeking safety and support, including clear separation between child safety responses and immigration enforcement wherever legally possible.

Question 3

What actions would best support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families to stay safe, thrive and remain connected to family, community, culture and Country?

MYAN supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination, community control and the commitments contained in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. The principles are well established. The Second Action Plans should concentrate on implementation, resourcing and accountability.[10]

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, communities and organisations should lead the design, delivery and evaluation of responses that affect them. Cultural connection, family and kinship, community leadership and connection to Country should be treated as central outcomes, not secondary considerations.

Where Aboriginal, multicultural and mainstream service systems operate in the same locations, collaboration should be strengthened without diluting Aboriginal leadership or transferring responsibility away from culturally governed services. Shared local planning can improve access and coordination while maintaining clear respect for self-determination.

Recommendations

- Embed relevant Closing the Gap commitments and priority reforms across the implementation, funding, governance and evaluation of the Second Action Plans.
- Provide sustained, flexible investment in Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Aboriginal-led prevention, early intervention, healing and recovery initiatives.
- Establish measurable implementation indicators for delegated authority, community-controlled commissioning, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, cultural connection and shared decision-making.
- Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are meaningfully represented in governance, monitoring and review arrangements.
- Support place-based collaboration between Aboriginal-controlled, multicultural, mainstream and specialist services where communities overlap, with Aboriginal leadership and decision-making protected.

Question 4

What is needed to strengthen the child and family workforce, so children, young people and families receive safe, high-quality and culturally responsive support?

Workforce capability and sustainability remain central implementation challenges. High turnover weakens continuity, trust, organisational memory and the ability to maintain relationships with children, families and communities. Short-term training alone cannot address this problem.[11]

Cultural safety remains necessary, but it is not sufficient for a population as diverse as Australia's. Reliance on individual bicultural workers cannot substitute for organisation-wide responsibility. The system should move towards cultural intelligence: the practical capacity of workers, volunteers, leaders and organisations to understand, adapt and respond effectively across diverse cultural contexts.[12]

[10] Australian Government (2020) National Agreement on Closing the Gap; Department of Social Services (2021); MYAN and 54 reasons (2026), pp. 98–99.
[11] MYAN and 54 reasons (2026), pp. 71–78; MYAN (2026), Submission to the Second Action Plan, p. 2.
[12] MYAN (2026), Submission to the Second Action Plan, workforce capability section; MYAN, Engage respectfully with young people from refugee backgrounds; MYAN (2026), Submission to the Second Action Plan, sections 1 and 7.

Cultural intelligence should include anti-racist practice, racial literacy and gender-responsive practice. Racism affects safety, trust, belonging, school engagement, mental health, participation and help-seeking. MYAN's 2026 identity research found that multicultural young women were significantly more likely to be stereotyped or misunderstood, described by participants as racialised sexism, and identified a disproportionate cultural load relating to cultural maintenance, language retention, family reputation and honour. Workforce capability must recognise these intersecting experiences without stereotyping communities or treating culture as the cause of harm.

Children and young people often disclose concerns to trusted adults outside specialist services, including teachers, school wellbeing staff, settlement workers, health practitioners, youth workers, coaches and community leaders. These workforces need the confidence, tools and organisational support to respond safely, explain what will happen, and connect the child to appropriate support.[13]

Capability should be maintained through pre-service education, professional standards, supervision, reflective practice and accessible implementation resources. Trained volunteers and community connectors should also be included where they form part of children's trusted support networks.

Workforce capability should also include recruitment, retention, development and progression of workers from diverse cultural, linguistic and lived-experience backgrounds. Diversity within the workforce can strengthen trust and responsiveness, but it should complement rather than replace organisation-wide cultural intelligence, safeguarding and accountability.

The system also requires specialist multicultural youth capability. Mainstream services cannot be expected to hold every community relationship, language capability or form of cultural expertise. Bicultural and bilingual workers, interpreters and specialist multicultural youth organisations should be recognised as essential parts of the workforce and service system, rather than used only when mainstream responses fail.

Workers need practical guidance on using interpreters safely, responding to visa-related concerns, understanding intergenerational family dynamics and distinguishing cultural context from explanations that minimise harm. This capability is necessary to support accurate assessment, safe communication and appropriate referrals, while preventing both the under-identification of harm and the racialised over-identification of multicultural children and young people as risks or perpetrators.

Systems should also resource secondary consultation and practice support between specialist child safety and family violence services and multicultural, settlement and youth organisations, particularly where specialist services require additional cultural, linguistic, migration or youth-specific expertise.

Recommendations

- Establish nationally consistent workforce capability expectations covering cultural intelligence, anti-racist practice, racial literacy, racialised sexism, child rights, child development, trauma-informed practice, participation and relational capability.
- Embed minimum competencies in relevant professional education, accreditation and continuing professional development, including teaching, health, law, psychology, social work and youth work.
- Recognise and rebuild specialist youth work and multicultural youth work as distinct professional capabilities, supported by supervision and career pathways.
- Require organisations, not only individual workers, to demonstrate cultural intelligence through governance, service design, workforce support, language access, data and accountability.

[13] MYAN and 54 reasons (2026), pp. 65–74; MYAN (2026), Submission to the Second Action Plan, workforce and disclosure sections.

- Develop national handbooks, practice libraries, service directories, referral tools and communities of practice to reduce knowledge loss from workforce turnover.
- Include trained volunteers and community connectors in capability-building and referral systems, with appropriate safeguarding, role clarity and support.
- Measure workforce capability through children's and families' experience, service access, trust and outcomes, not only completion of training.
- Invest in bicultural and bilingual workers and specialist multicultural youth organisations as core child and family system infrastructure.
- Establish practice standards for working safely and effectively with interpreters, including confidentiality, child participation and the management of family or community relationships.
- Develop culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate responses for young people using violence or displaying harmful sexual behaviours, combining accountability, therapeutic support, family engagement were safe and continuity in education.
- Build workforce capability to prevent both the under-identification of harm and the racialised over-identification of multicultural children and young people as risks or perpetrators.

Question 5

What guidance, resources, practice tools or other supports would help organisations strengthen children's and young people's safety, wellbeing, voice and participation?

Children and young people should be partners in identifying problems, setting priorities, designing responses, overseeing implementation and evaluating outcomes. Participation is both a right and a contributor to safety, trust and service quality.[14]

Participation should be strengths-based and should recognise that young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are already contributing through peer education, leadership, family support, community connection and advocacy. MYAN's work emphasises building on young people's capabilities and working with them as partners in service planning and delivery, rather than framing them only through vulnerability or risk.[15]

Participation should not be reduced to consultation. Governments and organisations should be able to show how children's views were considered, what changed as a result and why some proposals were not adopted.

Participation can also cause harm when it is poorly designed. Advisory processes may favour confident, highly connected or English-speaking young people and exclude quieter, multilingual, neurodivergent, geographically isolated or otherwise less visible participants. Young people should not be expected to disclose personal experiences to establish credibility.[16]

Multicultural children and young people are often included only within broad child or youth consultations. Safe and Supported requires ongoing mechanisms through which culturally, linguistically and migration-diverse children can shape policy and accountability in their own right, while remaining visible across the broader agenda.

[14] Australian Human Rights Commission (2026), p. 13; MYAN and 54 reasons (2026), pp. 102–107.
[15] MYAN (2022), pp. 2–3 and 11–12; MYAN (2018), pp. 2–4.
[16] MYAN (2026), Submission to the Second Action Plan, p. 2; MYAN and 54 reasons (2026), pp. 32–33 and 105–106.

Peak bodies can provide participation infrastructure because they hold trusted relationships across young people, communities, services and government. This role requires dedicated investment, safeguards and accountability rather than reliance on short-term project consultation.[17]

Organisations need practical tools for culturally safe disclosure, interpreter use, digital safety, recovery planning, family engagement, referral follow-through and culturally responsive risk assessment. The guidance should explain how to involve families and communities where appropriate without compromising a child's safety, privacy, informed participation or independent voice.

Participation resources should also guard against extractive engagement. Children and young people should not be repeatedly asked to disclose difficult personal experiences without clear purpose, preparation, support and evidence that their contribution influenced decisions.

Recommendations

- Develop national standards for safe, ethical, inclusive and meaningful participation, co-designed with children and young people and supported by practical implementation guidance.
- Distinguish clearly between consultation, co-design, youth-led activity, governance participation and accountability participation, with expectations appropriate to each purpose.
- Require participation plans to address informed consent, accessibility, language, preparation, appropriate remuneration, safeguarding, support after participation and feedback on how input was used. Young people contributing expertise, lived experience or ongoing governance should not be expected to provide unpaid labour.
- Assess participation not only by who took part, but also by who was absent or excluded, whether participation was safe, and whether children's views influenced decisions.
- Embed child and youth representation in the implementation, monitoring and review of the Second Action Plans and publicly report how their views affected priorities and decisions.
- Create ongoing, adequately funded mechanisms for multicultural children and young people to contribute to policy, governance and evaluation.
- Publish accessible and youth-friendly versions of the Action Plans, progress reports and feedback pathways.
- Develop practical guidance on culturally safe disclosure, interpreter use, family engagement, digital safety, recovery planning and referral follow-through.
- Test resources with multicultural children, young people, families and specialist organisations before publication, including young people who are multilingual, living with disability, in regional areas, on temporary visas or less connected to formal advisory structures.
- Require organisations to explain how children's and young people's contributions affected decisions and to provide accessible feedback after consultation or co-design.
- Avoid repeated or unnecessary retelling of traumatic experiences by recognising existing consultation evidence and creating safe methods for using lived-experience knowledge.

[17] MYAN (2026), Submission on the Department of Social Services' Relational Commissioning Approach; MYAN (2026), Submission to the Second Action Plan, p. 2.

Question 6

What would help governments, services and communities understand whether the Second Action Plans are improving outcomes for children, young people and families?

Australia has a substantial evidence base. The recurring problem is that recommendations are repeated while implementation remains fragmented and accountability for outcomes is unclear. Monitoring should therefore focus on whether commitments are implemented and whether children's lives improve, not only whether activities are completed.[18]

Government departments, service providers, consultants, researchers and communities each hold part of the picture. Monitoring and evaluation undertaken separately can reproduce silos and blind spots. A stronger approach would combine administrative data, service evidence, community intelligence, children's and families' experiences, and independent system-level analysis.

Current data systems do not consistently make multicultural children and young people visible. Definitions, age groupings and collection practices vary, while second-generation children and young people can disappear from view when settlement eligibility or recency of arrival is used as the main identifier. Data standards should therefore support consistent disaggregation by age, language, cultural background, migration and settlement experience, including second-generation experience, geography and other relevant factors. These standards should include privacy protections, safeguards against harmful categorisation and clear rules governing how data is interpreted and used.[19]

Data and implementation plans should also identify where multicultural children and young people are living in regional, rural and remote communities and assess both service availability and cultural capability. These communities can experience a double gap where mainstream services are limited and specialist multicultural services are scarce.

Accountability should extend to funding. The real cost of quality service delivery, coordination, participation, cultural capability and evaluation should be made transparent. Organisations should be funded according to the role and capacity required, but investment must be linked to clear outcomes, quality expectations and transparent performance measures. Funding should build sustainable system capability without becoming detached from measurable benefit to children and families. Seed funding for ecosystem development should be separately identified so that independent coordination does not become contingent on winning direct service contracts.

Peak bodies and intermediary organisations can help identify patterns across sectors, test whether reported activity reflects community experience, convene diverse evidence and highlight blind spots. Their role should complement, not replace, statutory oversight, independent commissioners, research and formal evaluation.[20]

Monitoring should include recovery over time, not only immediate service contact. Relevant measures may include housing stability, education continuity, mental health and wellbeing, social connection, trusted relationships, belonging and sustained access to support at appropriate follow-up points.

Evaluation should identify whether multicultural children and young people experience unequal system responses. This includes measuring barriers to disclosure, inappropriate or incomplete referrals, service

[18] MYAN and 54 reasons (2026), pp. 18–19, 92–101 and 109–110; Australian Human Rights Commission (2026), p. 10.
[19] MYAN (2026), Submission to the Second Action Plan, sections 1 and 7; Australian Human Rights Commission (2026), pp. 10 and 24–25.
[20] MYAN (2026), Submission on the Department of Social Services' Relational Commissioning Approach; MYAN and 54 reasons (2026), pp. 92–101.

disengagement, disproportionate disciplinary or justice responses, misidentification as perpetrators, and differences in access, continuity and outcomes across population groups.

For each priority, public reporting should identify a baseline, a time-bound milestone, the responsible portfolio or agency, the required data source and how outcomes will be disaggregated. This would allow governments, services, communities, children and families to distinguish implementation progress from activity reporting and determine whether outcomes are improving equitably.

A national improvement in average outcomes should not be considered sufficient where particular groups of children and young people continue to experience lower access, safety, trust, continuity or recovery. Monitoring should therefore identify inequities as well as aggregate change.

Recommendations

- Develop a nationally agreed Child and Youth Outcomes Framework aligned across Safe and Supported and other relevant national plans and strategies.
- Include shared indicators for safety, wellbeing, belonging, participation, trust, cultural responsiveness, educational engagement, service access, referral completion, continuity and long-term outcomes.
- Require consistent, age-disaggregated and culturally relevant data that makes multicultural children and young people, including second-generation cohorts, visible across universal and specialist systems.
- Introduce Child Rights Impact Assessments for major policy, legislative, funding and commissioning decisions affecting children and young people.
- Publish implementation milestones, funding allocations, outcome measures and progress reports in accessible formats.
- Link funding to clear outcomes, quality standards and accountability while recognising the distinct contributions of service delivery, prevention, advocacy, coordination and system stewardship.
- Invest in independent ecosystem-level monitoring and system intelligence that combines government, service, research, community, child and family perspectives.
- Resource peak bodies and intermediary organisations as accountability and learning partners, with clear independence, scope and reporting expectations.
- Include medium- and longer-term recovery measures, including housing stability, education continuity, wellbeing, social connection, belonging and sustained engagement with support.
- Monitor barriers to disclosure, failed or incomplete referrals, service disengagement, misidentification of victim-survivors as perpetrators and unequal disciplinary or justice responses.
- Combine quantitative data with qualitative evidence from children, young people, families and communities about whether services feel safe, trustworthy, culturally responsive and effective.
- Establish participatory research on the experiences of multicultural children and young people affected by violence, abuse and system involvement, with appropriate safeguarding and community governance.

Cross-cutting reform priorities

The following cross-cutting priorities should guide the design, implementation, funding and evaluation of every element of the Second Action Plans. They consolidate themes raised throughout MYAN's responses and identify the tests that should be applied across all portfolios and jurisdictions.

Multicultural children and young people as a mainstream cohort

Multicultural children and young people should be visible across every priority, outcome, dataset, funding model, governance structure and accountability mechanism. They should not be confined to targeted programs or considered only when newly arrived or in crisis. This includes first-generation young people, those

who arrived during childhood and second-generation young people, with particular attention to the gap between settlement eligibility and ongoing needs relating to identity, racism, belonging and family navigation.

Children's rights in decision-making

Children's best interests, participation, non-discrimination, safety, development and access to culturally responsive support should guide policy and funding. Child Rights Impact Assessments provide a practical way to embed these considerations across government.[21]

Racism as a child safety and wellbeing issue

Racism should be addressed as a distinct and measurable issue affecting safety, education, mental health, help-seeking, participation, identity and belonging. This must include racialised sexism, which can expose children and young people to overlapping racial and gender-based harm, stereotyping and exclusion. The experiences of second-generation children and young people must also be visible, as they can be overlooked by both settlement-specific and mainstream systems. Racism should not be hidden within broader bullying or inclusion responses.[22]

Belonging as an outcome

Belonging, trusted relationships, identity and community connection are protective factors and should be measured alongside safety and wellbeing.[23]

Place-based delivery within national coordination

Settlement and multicultural services as prevention infrastructure

Settlement and multicultural organisations should be recognised and resourced as prevention, early intervention, navigation and community education infrastructure. Their contribution should connect children and families to universal systems while retaining specialist multicultural youth expertise and trusted community relationships.

Culturally grounded prevention with boys and young men

The Second Action Plans should support culturally grounded, youth-led prevention with boys and young men, including healthy masculinities, respectful relationships, gender equality and responses to online misogyny. Prevention should address the interaction of gender norms with racism, migration stress, identity, belonging and social exclusion without attributing violence to culture.

Children and young people affected by violence as victim-survivors in their own right

Children and young people affected by violence should have direct, developmentally appropriate pathways to safety, advocacy, recovery and participation. Their needs should be considered independently of the adult response and across prevention, response, recovery, workforce, data and evaluation.

National standards and accountability should support locally responsive design. Place-based implementation should connect settlement and multicultural organisations, universal services, specialist services and trusted community settings through practical tools, formal relationships and flexible delivery. Children and families should receive consistent rights, access and quality regardless of where they live.

Sustainable system capability

Funding should support continuity, workforce capability, organisational relationships, participation infrastructure, system learning and prevention, not only short-term service outputs.

[21] Australian Human Rights Commission (2026), pp. 9–10; MYAN and 54 reasons (2026), pp. 102–104.
[22],[22] MYAN (2026), Submission to the Second Action Plan

Priority implementation actions 2027–2031

MYAN proposes eight priority implementation actions for 2027–2031. Together, they translate the submission's evidence into a practical package covering outcomes monitoring, cross-portfolio governance, culturally grounded prevention, culturally safe guidance, specialist navigation, settlement-sector infrastructure, referral standards and a multicultural lens across Safe and Supported. Each action should have a responsible agency, time-bound milestones, dedicated funding and public reporting.

The evidence is consistent across consultations, inquiries, Commissioner reports, human rights submissions and sector research. Children and young people require earlier support, stronger coordination, meaningful participation, culturally responsive services, sustainable workforce capability and clearer accountability for outcomes.

For multicultural children and young people, the challenge is not simply access to services. It is whether systems are designed from the outset to recognise diversity, respond to complexity and support belonging, participation, safety and wellbeing.

MYAN recommends that the Second Action Plans establish clear implementation architecture, coordinated governance, shared accountability, meaningful participation and measurable outcomes. Multicultural children and young people must be visible across every priority, performance measure and accountability framework because they are a mainstream part of Australia's child and youth population and an essential test of whether universal systems are genuinely inclusive and effective.

The ultimate test of reform will be whether all children and young people, regardless of cultural, linguistic, migration or settlement background, can access support early, experience safe and culturally responsive responses when harm occurs, participate meaningfully in decisions that affect them, experience belonging, recover and thrive.

- Establish disaggregated and participatory outcomes monitoring that measures safety, access, trust, cultural responsiveness, belonging, continuity, recovery and inequity across population groups and locations.
- Establish cross-portfolio implementation arrangements involving DSS, Health, Education, Home Affairs and state and territory systems, with defined responsibilities for shared outcomes, referral pathways, workforce capability and data.
- Fund culturally grounded, youth-led prevention with boys and young men, including healthy masculinities, respectful relationships, gender equality and responses to harmful online content and misogyny.
- Develop national guidance for culturally safe responses to children and young people affected by family violence, including migration-related abuse, visa-related risks, interpreters, disclosure, confidentiality and child protection concerns.
- Fund specialist multicultural youth navigation and secondary consultation capacity across settlement, youth, child safety and family violence systems.
- Recognise and resource settlement and multicultural organisations as prevention and early-intervention infrastructure and as safe first touchpoints for children and families.
- Establish national principles and standards for No Wrong Door, No Wrong Person and No Lost Referral, including responsibility for follow-through and confirmed access.
- Establish a multicultural children and young people lens across all Safe and Supported priorities, outcomes, indicators, funding arrangements, governance structures and implementation mechanisms.

References

- MYAN and 54 reasons (2026), From Recognition to Action: Delivering for Children and Young People through the Second Action Plan.
- Australian Human Rights Commission (2026), NHRI Submission on the List of Issues Prior to Reporting under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- MYAN (2026), Submission to the Second Action Plan.
- MYAN and 54 reasons (2026), Multicultural Children and Young People in Australia: National Challenges, Opportunities and System Reform Priorities.
- MYAN (2026), Submission on the Department of Social Services' Relational Commissioning Approach.
- MYAN and Social Policy Group (2026), Belonging Within and Across Cultures: Exploring Multicultural Youth Identity in Australia.
- Australian Human Rights Commission (2024), Help Way Earlier! How Australia Can Transform Child Justice.
- MYAN (2022), Submission: Next Steps to Improve Australia's Settlement and Integration of Refugees.
- Department of Social Services (2021), Safe and Supported: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031.
- Australian Government (2020), National Agreement on Closing the Gap.
- MYAN (2018), Submission to the National Children's Commissioner on Australia's Progress on Children's Rights.