

OUR PATH

We catalyse change by bringing
people and knowledge together
for the benefit of all children and
young people in Australia



**THREE
YEAR
STRATEGY
2021 - 2023**



A
FEW
WORDS





Message from the ARACY Board Chair

ARACY was established in 2002 by former Australian of The Year, Professor Fiona Stanley AC, and continues her vision of using the best available evidence to help all children and young people in Australia to thrive.

ARACY has always and continues to maintain the highest standards of governance. Our Board insists that ARACY runs efficiently and effectively, meeting all duty and fiduciary responsibilities and complying with all reporting and other requirements of the ACNC, ASIC and best practice governance. We have a mix of strong academic, legal and financial skills and a focus on culture, strategy, systems thinking and, importantly, impact.

Our management team, staff, consultant HR and strategic financial advisers are highly experienced and clear on the Board's requirements.

Our rigorous governance and financial management are recognised by organisations such as The Minderoo Foundation, The Ian Potter Foundation, The BHP Foundation and the Australian Government, all of which are currently partnering with ARACY.

As such, any organisation seeking to invest effectively to achieve real and lasting change for children and young people in Australia can be confident in ARACY's track record, future and ability to deliver.

Professor Gervase Chaney
Chair

Message from the ARACY Chief Executive Officer

This document sets out what ARACY believes to be an aspirational but pragmatic set of strategic goals with the single aim of improving the lives and prospects of children and young people in Australia.

ARACY is a unique organisation, performing the unique role of bringing people and knowledge together and helping to put both to work to grow capability across the sector, influence decision making and catalyse collective action.

Just as collaboration is central to our core business, so it has been central to the development of our strategy. With input from our national network of government and non-government members, stakeholders and partners, we have developed a strategy that by virtue of its development, has strong alignment with a broad section of our sector and a focus on addressing long-standing issues and those either exacerbated or created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

I thank the many partners who have helped us develop this robust, evidence-based and deliverable plan, and I look forward to working with many more current and new partners as we move forward to deliver on it.

Penny Dakin
Chief Executive Officer





OUR ASPIRATION

All children and young people are loved and thriving.

OUR INTENT

We catalyse change by bringing people and knowledge together for the benefit of children and young people in Australia.

Our Aspiration

All children and young people are loved and thriving.

Our Intent

We catalyse change by bringing people and knowledge together for the benefit of children and young people in Australia.

We Believe

That all children and young people in Australia should have every opportunity to thrive.

To thrive, children and young people need to be **valued, loved and safe**, they need their **basic material needs** met, they need to be **healthy, learning, participating** in family, community and decision making, and have a **positive sense of their identity and culture**.

Listening to children and young people is integral to what we do. The right of every child to have a say about issues that affect them is upheld in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. When we listen to the views of children and young people we make better decisions, write better policy and directly benefit young Australians.

We can create more significant change by working together. When we channel the efforts of our many and varied partners and stakeholders, we can create lasting and transformative change in systems, policies and practice, and ultimately, improvements in the daily lives and futures of children and young people.

Our Values

Connectedness: We build genuine partnerships and acknowledge that true collaboration involves giving something up for the greater good.

Equity: We are committed to helping build a society that understands and respects fairness and equity, and values children not only as future adult contributors but for their own place and voice in society.

Inclusion: We value the breadth and depth of all people and ideas regardless of ethnicity, religion, age, political affiliation, gender, sexuality or other characteristics.

Integrity: We are non-partisan. We advocate for and with children and young people. We present the evidence even when it challenges common understanding. We manage the resources available to us honestly and responsibly.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Executive Summary

Four Pillars

1. Put knowledge to work
2. Grow capability
3. Influence decision making
4. Catalyse collective action

Our Strategies

Strategy 1: Generate opportunities and align action to improve the daily lives of children and young people

Strategy 2: Develop resources that improve decision making and practice

Strategy 3: Strengthen and use ARACY's voice to improve the wellbeing of children and young people

Strategy 4: Provide a space and support for cross-sectoral collective leadership that improves systems through the unifying vision of the Nest

Strategic Goals

- The voices of children and young people across Australia are captured and used to refresh the Nest; the National Wellbeing Framework for Children and Young People.
- Early Childhood Development will be the focus of increased collective action and advocacy including a shared vision and plan to redress the systemic barriers, problems and gaps that are inhibiting Australian children from thriving in the first 1000 days and beyond.
- Policy, research and practice discussions about the wellbeing of children and young people will be influenced and informed by reliable data and evidence.
- All people in Australia working with and on behalf of children, young people and their families are highly skilled in the science of brain development.
- The 'middle years' will be elevated in the national discourse as an important period of a young person's development and a new collective will be convened to progress a national policy response.

Our Enablers

To support aspiration and intent we're also focusing on:

1. Securing our Financial Sustainability

We will improve and maintain our strong reputation and engagement with current and potential funders: government, business and philanthropy. We aim to be the recognised leader in strategically improving outcomes for children. By engaging purposefully with funders, we aim to not only ensure funds are directed to the most impactful responses, but also, attract funds to support achieving ARACY's strategy.

2. Rethinking our Engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, Communities and Organisations

We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities were the first sovereign peoples of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and have been Custodians under their own laws and customs. We acknowledge that this sovereignty is a spiritual notion: an ancestral tie between the lands and seas, and 'mother nature'. This link, this ancestral Indigenous sovereignty, has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.¹

ARACY will continue to strengthen and deepen our engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations. We are open to change, and will actively pursue collaborations and partnerships that align with our organisational values. We will continue to privilege Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, particularly those of children and young people.

3. Enhancing Employee Wellbeing

We trust our people to deliver on our strategy. We know that it's vital to support all elements of wellbeing in relation to our people and culture, creating an environment where all team members have the opportunity to flourish. We will focus on 'how' we deliver as well as 'what' we aim to achieve. The way we support our teams will continue to evolve to match the changing environment. Our people and culture strategy will:

- Identify ways to enhance individual and team wellbeing and improve the employee experience
- Maintain focus on understanding and aligning individuals' strengths with our organisational pillars and strategies through job crafting
- Create personal, team-based and professional development opportunities to enable employees and teams to flourish

¹ Adapted from the Uluru Statement from the Heart <https://ulurustatement.org/the-statement>

4. Strengthening our Reputation & Relationships

We will strengthen our commitment to collaborating with others. We'll do so with an openness to learn and adapt, as well as a willingness to take risks, acknowledge the journey we're on and do things differently where necessary. We'll grow our levels of Cultural Competency and Cultural Intelligence and actively pursue reconciliation and deep engagement with our First Nations collaborators.

5. Measuring our Impact

Measuring our impact will allow ARACY to demonstrate that what we do makes a difference. Our culture of measurement and evaluation will also enable us to improve our impact by identifying areas of strengths and weaknesses and adapting and evolving in response.

6. Continuously Improving our Processes, Systems and Infrastructure

ARACY is a learning organisation. We regularly audit our internal processes, seek candid feedback from staff and partners, and support creativity in the workplace.



OUR
ENABLERS

OUR IMPACT


At ARACY we know the work we're doing is making a difference. Our partners also recognise our effectiveness.

ARACY is the confirming instance of Educator Impact's strategy to partner with "experts with impact." Their mission, expertise, and commitment are evident in all aspects of their work, and the team is an absolute pleasure to work with. We are excited and humbled to be a part of ARACY's plans for the future.

Nabil Shaheen
Chief Executive Officer
Educator Impact

Marymead has been engaged for almost a decade with ARACY and their Common Approach in the delivery of services to the Marymead clients based in the ACT and surrounding NSW regions. ARACY over the years has consistently demonstrated excellent support and great training for our Marymead staff team. We recognise they have also kept Marymead informed on developments and other complementary tools and research which enhance our understanding and practice.

Camilla Rowland
Chief Executive Officer
Marymead



ARACY and UNICEF Australia's monthly publication, the *Children and Young People's Knowledge Acceleration Hub*, which draws together the latest research and analysis of COVID-19 and its impact, is an invaluable resource which we are using to scope and develop our COVID-19 reports relevant to children and families. To have a single, regularly updated, resource of this kind allows us to monitor the latest research more efficiently and focus more of our time on data improvement activities and the analysis, synthesis and drafting of relevant reports.

Barry Sandison
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

The Ian Potter Foundation has enjoyed a long and engaging relationship with ARACY, contributing funding to pilot programs, the development of an early language and literacy strategy and the Great to Eight decadal plan to develop a roadmap for future early childhood research. This nationally significant project sets an ambitious, achievable 10-year research agenda for early childhood development in Australia that seeks to drive improved outcomes for young Australians.

Craig Connelly
Chief Executive Officer
Ian Potter Foundation

1.
Put
Knowledge to
work



2.
Grow
capability



FOUR
PILLARS

3.
Influence
decision
making



4.
Catalyse
collective
action



Our Work

We bring people and knowledge together through four action pillars. We:

1. Put Knowledge to Work

We are thought leaders, a national voice for the wellbeing of children and young people. We identify the best data and evidence from research, evaluation and the lived experience of children, young people and those who care for them. We prioritise what matters and what works to create opportunities for governments, policy makers, business, philanthropy and practitioners working with children and young people to access, understand and use this knowledge.

2. Grow Capability

We develop and deliver resources that grow capabilities at practice, service, organisational, community and systems levels.

3. Influence Decision Making

We translate and disseminate data and evidence, amplifying the work of our partners. Our influence supports decision making that privileges children and young people and supports better systems and better outcomes. We will continue to build the coalition for a new public narrative about child development and the wellbeing of children and young people.

4. Catalyse Collective Action

Through the Nest framework we provide a unifying agenda for improving the wellbeing of children and young people. We partner with a diverse cross section of stakeholders to define problems, clarify challenges, advocate for systems change and determine strategic pathways that enable more children and young people to thrive.

KEY STRATEGIES 2021 - 2023



ARACY will continue to provide the services, advocacy and training opportunities for which we are well known. We will maintain our respected communications channels, evidence-based advocacy, research support and stakeholder engagement. We are, as always, looking for new opportunities and innovative ways to work with our many and varied partners. The initiatives described below offer a snapshot of the most promising opportunities.

Strategy 1: Generate opportunities and aligned actions to improve the daily lives of children and young people.

- 1.1 Lead the creation of dynamic sources of reliable data and policy direction that track progress and mitigate the impacts of the global pandemic on the wellbeing of children and young people including the Australian Children and Young People's Knowledge Acceleration Hub and the Australian Index of Child and Youth Wellbeing with UNICEF Australia.
- 1.2 Advance the development of a research partnership and proposal that synthesises sustained nurse home visiting, concurrent planning, and family mentoring into a new program to support children under five entering care.
- 1.3 Auspice the Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership to showcase and amplify the power of joined-up, cross-sectoral activity as a means of creating systemic changes that improve outcomes for children.

Strategy 2: Develop resources that improve decision making and practice.

- 2.1 Lead the Brain Builders Alliance with a focus on the creation of an Australian-specific *Brain Story* certification resource for all people working with children, young people and their families.
- 2.2 Support the expansion of the EI Pulse real-time wellbeing check-in app and embed the Common Approach in the Australian school system as a means of supporting wellbeing.
- 2.3 Make online training in the Common Approach accessible and affordable.

Strategy 3: Strengthen and use ARACY's voice to improve the wellbeing of children and young people.

3.1 Expand ARACY's program of knowledge dissemination through the utilisation of technology-based innovations including website redesign.

3.2 Lead and participate in better joined-up and aligned advocacy activities and campaigns (for example, the Thrive by Five early years education campaign, the Raise The Rate anti-poverty campaign).

Strategy 4: Provide a space and support for cross-sectoral collective leadership that improves systems through the unifying vision of the Nest.

4.1 Provide strategic support and alignment for collective leadership initiatives in the early years including through the Early Childhood Impact Alliance.

4.2 Spearhead critical field development activity for child wellbeing by leading high level, cross-sector undertakings, starting with securing funding for a whole-of-system mapping exercise for the early years.

4.3 Create and lead a new cross-sector coalition to create a shared vision and agenda for investment in the crucial 'middle years'.





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