

Collaborate
for kids

TELETHON
KIDS
INSTITUTE



minderoo



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK
SUMMARY DOCUMENT



Why we need to *act now*

The **early years** - from pregnancy to the start of school - set the foundations for a child's future wellbeing and success. We need to combine efforts and share knowledge to ensure every Australian child gets the best possible start in life.

CoLab has been established to help bring together the expertise of families, policy makers, clinicians, educators, other practitioners and researchers to work together to improve the learning and development of our children and overcome inequality.

CoLab was launched through a partnership between the Telethon Kids Institute and the Minderoo Foundation, made possible by Minderoo's founding commitment of AU \$1 million annually.

Our Strategic Approach

To develop this strategic framework, **Colab** sought to determine the current development and learning status of Australia's children and the circumstances and conditions in which they were growing up. We did this by holding a Strategy Summit, conducting a Delphi Survey, meeting key stakeholders across all sectors and researching current trends, issues and barriers for children and their families.

Our review drew some broad conclusions;

- Most Australian children are doing well, but there is a sizeable minority who are vulnerable and falling further behind.
- Services are poorly coordinated and communities want more say in how services are delivered.
- Research shows what children need for optimal development and learning; but not how to provide it for all children.
- People want to collaborate to improve the future of our children; but they are unsure of the best way to go about it.





Development and Learning Status of Young Children in Australian

According to the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC¹) most of Australia's children are developing well. However, there is a widening gap in the proportion of developmentally vulnerable children between the most disadvantaged areas and least disadvantaged areas¹.

The 2015 AEDC shows that:

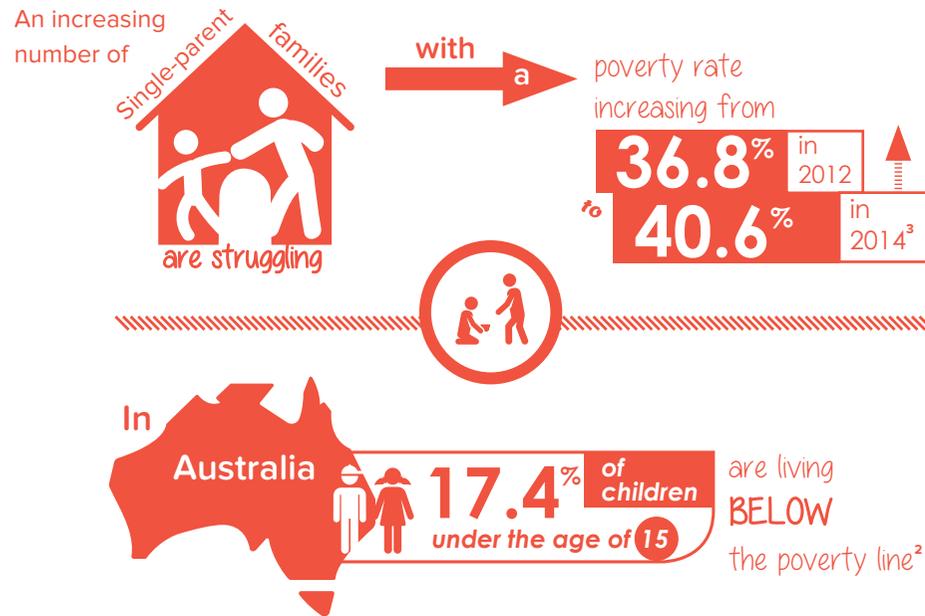
- ▶ Children living in the most socio-economically disadvantaged areas were 4.1 times more likely to be developmentally vulnerable than those from the least disadvantaged areas;
- ▶ Children living in very remote Australia were 4.8 times more likely to be developmentally vulnerable than children living in major cities;
- ▶ 21.3% of Western Australian children were identified as developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains, and 10.5% were identified as developmentally vulnerable in two or more domains¹

Unacceptable inequality in development and learning continues to exist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children. In 2015, Aboriginal children were twice as likely to be developmentally vulnerable than non-Aboriginal children; although the gap is beginning to close in some domains¹. Aboriginal children continue to experience poorer health and education outcomes, and are over-represented in the child protection system

¹ Department of Education and Training. Australian Early Development Census - 2015 National Report. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory; 2016

Indicators of Inequality

Other health, economic and social indicators reveal further inequality impacting on the development and learning of children from disadvantaged backgrounds.



Poverty impacts significantly on development and learning with the gap continuing to widen. Devastatingly, across the entire Australian community, the numbers of children reported as experiencing trauma and domestic and family violence has increased⁴. Significant or prolonged activation of the stress response systems can have lifelong damaging effects on learning, behaviour and health⁵.

² Saunders, P, Bradbury B, Wong, M, Poverty in Australia (2016). Australian Council of Social Service and the Social Policy Research Centre, 2016, University of New South Wales; Strawberry Hills.

³ Saunders, P, Bradbury B, Wong, M, Poverty in Australia (2016). Australian Council of Social Service and the Social Policy Research Centre, 2016, University of New South Wales; Strawberry Hills.

⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2015). Child protection Australia 2013-14. Canberra: AIHW. Retrieved from <www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=60129550762>

⁵ Shonkoff, J. P., Julius Richmond FAMRI Professor, C. B., Levitt, P., Bunge, S. A., Cameron, J. L., Duncan, G. J., ... Nelson III, C. A. (2016). From Best Practices to Breakthrough Impacts. Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 1-52.



A close-up photograph of a young child's face, showing their blue eyes and a pink knit beanie. The child is smiling slightly, showing their teeth. The background is a soft, out-of-focus pink.

Statement of Direction

A **Vision** for the future

Young children in Australia develop, learn and thrive so they can build a better future for themselves and their communities.

Our **Mission**

To bring together families, clinicians, educators, policy makers, other practitioners and researchers to provide evidence to improve service delivery and community capacity to meet the needs of children, families and communities who are experiencing vulnerability.

Our Values

We combine efforts and work in partnership.

We respect the contributions of all who work at and with the Collaboration.*

We care for children and the community, in Western Australia and beyond.*

We listen to children, families and communities and are driven by their priorities and knowledge.

We challenge existing ideas and ourselves, and seek innovative and creative ways to find solutions.

We share robust, practical and accessible evidence.

We translate our research into actions that can make a difference, and we always measure impact.

We act in ways that build capacity.

*Telethon Kids Institute Strategic Plan 2013 – 2017 Value

The Knowledge that underpins our work

“A person’s wellbeing is shaped by their experiences in the early years of life.

Successful, appropriate intervention in the earliest years has the potential to improve a child’s life course.

Collaboration between stakeholders including families, clinicians and other practitioners is required to improve childhood development and learning.

Early childhood services must be integrated and accessible.

What we will do

To deliver our Mission we will:

- Identify gaps in the current knowledge of early childhood within Australia and conduct new research to address these.
- Synthesise and interpret existing evidence in varying contexts.
- Translate evidence into policy and practice for families, service providers and policy makers.
- Support the integration of early childhood services to respond to the needs of children, families and communities experiencing vulnerability.

Our ways of working will be to establish and build partnerships with service providers, actively collaborate with other researchers and provide information to parents and families. Our activities will include:

- **For families and children:** provide accessible summaries of evidence in plain language, Apps and other technology-based products to enhance access to services and information on early childhood development.
- **For service providers:** partner in demonstration projects, develop partnerships (e.g. shared initiatives and outplaced officers), conduct exploratory, evaluative and commissioned research, develop evidence summaries and position papers, host forums and think tanks and support capacity building.
- **For policy makers:** provide policy briefs, evidence summaries, position papers and host forums and think tanks.

The scope of our work will be defined by:

- Focussing on children's development, health and learning from pre-birth to age 8.
- Working in consultation with families, service providers, and policy makers.
- Concentrating initially on Western Australia and then nationally through collaboration with others.





Our Enduring Priorities

Children and Families Experiencing Vulnerability

Early childhood offers the best chance to intervene and make changes to help stop the cycle of poverty and disadvantage in families and create a fairer society. Our focus on children and families experiencing vulnerability will identify the opportunities for prevention, early intervention and treatment. Working with Aboriginal families to enhance the cultural sensitivity of services is a priority for our work.

Place-based Approaches for Families and Communities

Services are most effective when they are integrated and delivered in a way that suits the circumstances, conditions and needs of families in their community. Our work will contribute to the understanding of how place-based initiatives can be most effective in the Western Australian and Australian contexts; with a focus on rural and remote communities. We will build on the work that others have already completed in finding the best ways to empower local decision making and identify the critical success factors for integrating children's services.

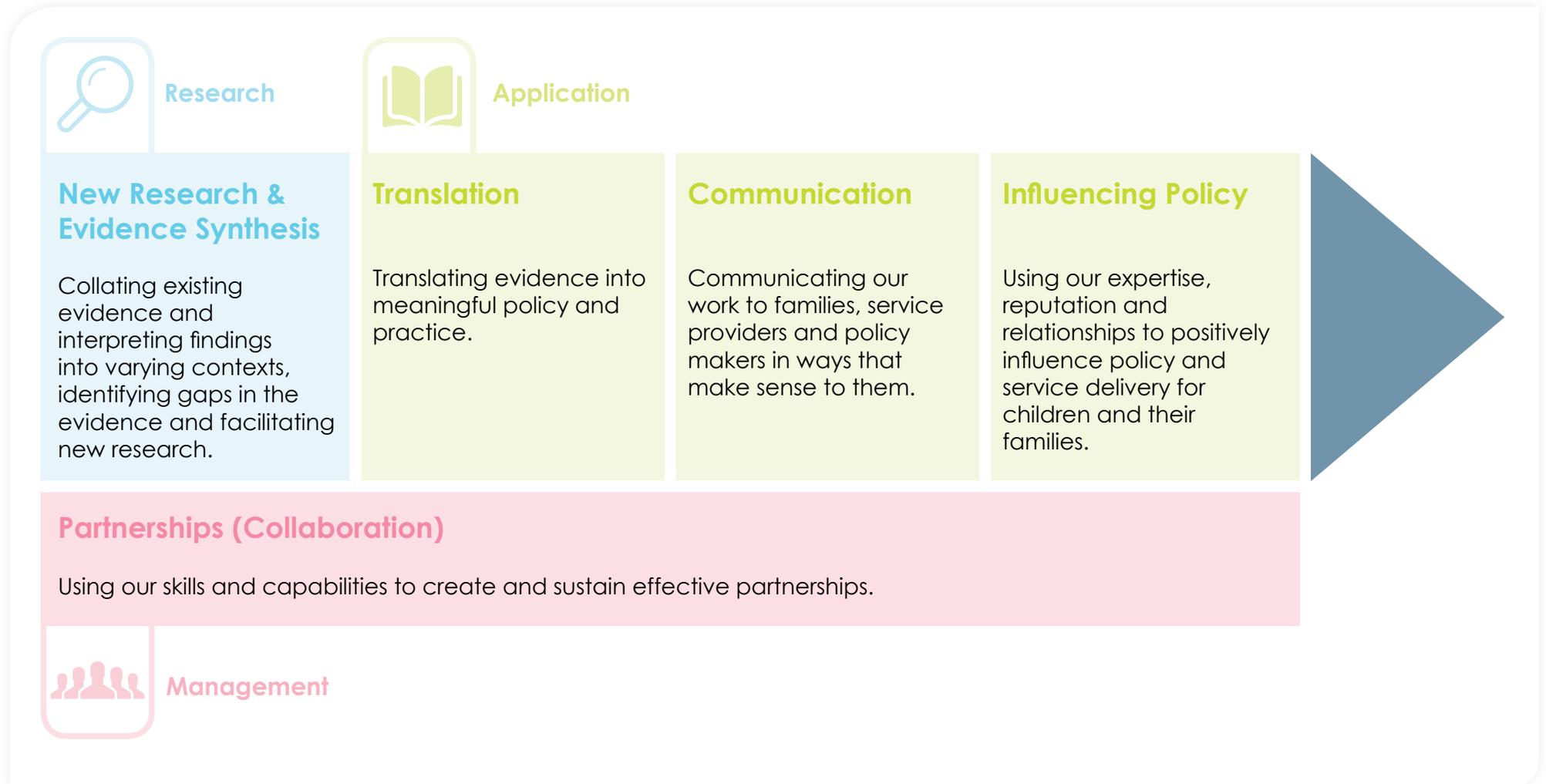
Economic Understanding of Early Childhood Services

International research has shown that quality early learning and development programs for disadvantaged children can foster valuable skills, strengthen our workforce, grow our economy and reduce social spending. This translates to economic and social benefits for the whole community. International research has proved interventions to address social issues are more effective and cheaper the earlier they occur in life. However, there is little research that has been completed in Australia. CoLab will bring together economists and early childhood experts to build a better understanding of investment returns, costs and financial benefits of providing early childhood services in Australia. This will provide better information for policy makers and the community on the short and long-term benefits of their investment.



Key Result Areas

Key results areas (KRAs) are those areas of activity that will require ongoing time, talent and resources over an extended period to successfully achieve CoLab's desired outcomes.





Background

CoLab was established to bring together the expertise of families, clinicians, educators, policy makers, other practitioners and researchers to work together to improve the development and learning of Australian children.

CoLab was launched through a partnership between the Telethon Kids Institute and the Minderoo Foundation.

Minderoo and Telethon Kids recognise early childhood as a time of great opportunity and significant risk. To improve the future for children, non-traditional partners need to work together over a sustained period of time. It is critical that we collaborate to ensure every Australian child gets the best possible start in life.

CoLab is committed to supporting integrated approaches that build sustainable empowerment in individuals and communities. CoLab provides a platform to enhance early childhood development and learning to ensure young children in Australia develop, learn and thrive.

Founding Partners

Telethon Kids Institute



The Telethon Kids Institute has a strong background and track record in research, evaluation and implementation around improving outcomes in the early years of a child's development.

It was a key partner in the Early Development Index being adapted and piloted in Australia, and then was a key partner in its subsequent national roll out as the Australian Early Development Census.

Through its WA Child Health Survey and the seminal WA Aboriginal Child Health Survey, Telethon Kids has provided the evidence and recommendations for many child health initiatives. It also has a proud history of advocacy, having lobbied for services through education and health services, resulting in the various models of family, child and parent centres and visiting midwife schemes.

Telethon Kids has always worked closely with community and service providers in both framing the research approach and the translation of research findings into policy and practice. This approach is entrenched in the Institute's strategic plan: Working Together 2013-2017 and described in a number of programs in its IMPACT report.

CoLab contributes significantly to the Telethon Kids Institute Strategic Plan. It will do this by working collaboratively to translate the Institute's knowledge and research into policy and practice, finding new ways to work in partnership with policy makers and service providers including how to best support families experiencing vulnerability.

telethonkids.org.au

The Minderoo Foundation



The Minderoo Foundation was founded by Andrew and Nicola Forrest in 2001 with a vision to give a hand up, not a hand out. The Foundation has committed over \$245 million to philanthropic causes and supported over 250 organisations in Australia and abroad.

We take a preventative approach through our philanthropy, which goes to the heart of Minderoo's efforts under the Thrive by Five initiative. Minderoo believes that by taking a long term and evidence-based approach to early childhood development as a nation, all children in Australia will thrive by the age of five. By starting school with the readiness to learn, a child is more likely to meet future health, education and emotional milestones.

In order to achieve this and building on a shared goal, Minderoo's founding investment in CoLab represents our belief that sound evidence, developed and translated in collaboration with a variety of stakeholders, is critical to achieving strong policy and practice. CoLab will translate what we already know for practical application and answer new questions to help build the case for a stronger early childhood system across Australia.

In addition to CoLab, our efforts include support for innovative models of service delivery, research partnerships and engagement with all levels of government on new policy initiatives. We believe integrated thinking across disciplines at a community and policy level is the most effective way to provide positive experiences in the early years and build happy, healthy and thriving children.

We invite you to join us in this important collaboration to enhance the lives of children across Australia.

minderoo.com.au

Our Council

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