

MEDIA RELEASE

20 January 2012

FOCUS ON PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE STILL NEEDED: FRSA

FRSA is calling for a greater focus on early intervention in preventing child abuse, with over 30,000 substantiated reports of child abuse in Australia in 2010-2011 according to the Australian Institute of Health & Welfare.

In response to the *Child Protection Australia 2010-11* report released today, Family & Relationship Services Australia Executive Director Samantha Page acknowledges that significant improvements in responding to child abuse and neglect have occurred, but more needs to be done to prevent abuse and neglect occurring.

"The Australian government and each of the State and Territory governments have worked together through the COAG process to improve child protection through the National Framework for Protecting Children since its inception in 2009, and there have been significant improvements throughout the system", said Ms Page.

"However, it is still concerning that since 2005, the number of children on care and protection orders have increased by 62% to nearly 40,000 children. We need an enhanced approach that prioritises the prevention of abuse and better supports Australian families."

"The most common forms of child maltreatment are emotional abuse and neglect. These forms of abuse typically occur in the context of problems in family relationships and family functioning where parents are unable to provide effective care to children. This can be the result of factors such as mental health issues, alcohol and substance abuse, financial stress, housing insecurity, locational disadvantage, family violence and a lack of relationship and communication skills."

"Increased support to families, particularly early intervention and more intensive support services available to families would help to turn the curve on child abuse and neglect. We shouldn't see abuse and neglect as inevitable, but rather a significant and preventable social problem."

"FRSA member organisations are at the frontline of supporting families at risk. They work to strengthen families, respond to risk factors and help families to navigate through difficult times. Resilient families, capable of 'bouncing back' after a setback and communicating when things get tough provide the best protection for children."

- ENDS -