



**WHY CHILD DEVELOPMENT
IS CRUCIAL FOR
OPPORTUNITY & PROSPERITY
IN AUSTRALIA IN THE
21ST CENTURY**

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ECONOMIC & SOCIAL OUTLOOK CONFERENCE

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OUTLINE

- 1. Scientific and Economic Evidence**
- 2. Modernity's Paradox: Australian Implications**
- 3. 3. Towards a Strong, Prosperous and Egalitarian Society**



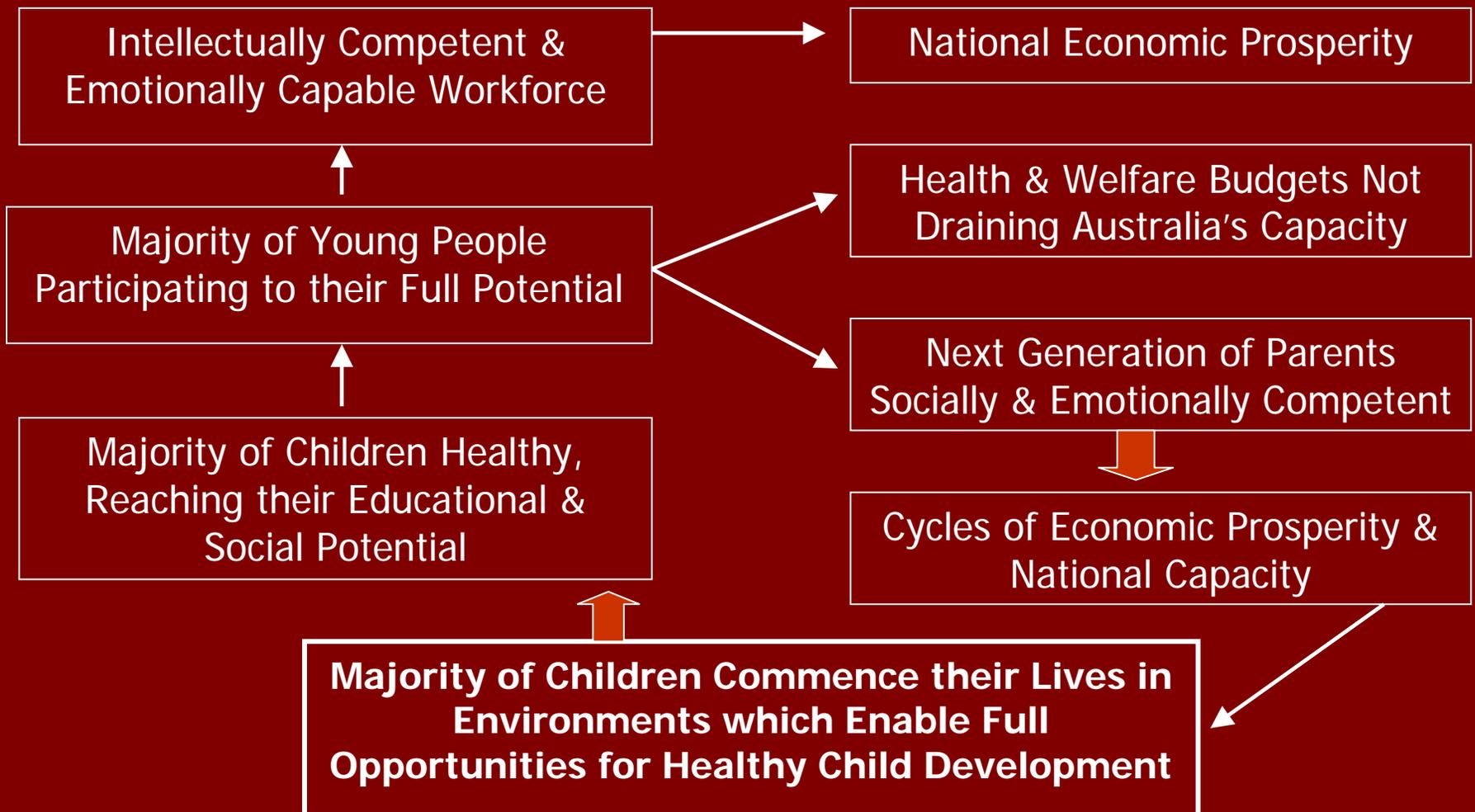
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Scientific & Economic Evidence:

- o - How child development leads to national development
- o - Why and how Canada, UK, World Bank are investing in ECD



Why is Child Health & Development Crucial for Australia's Future?

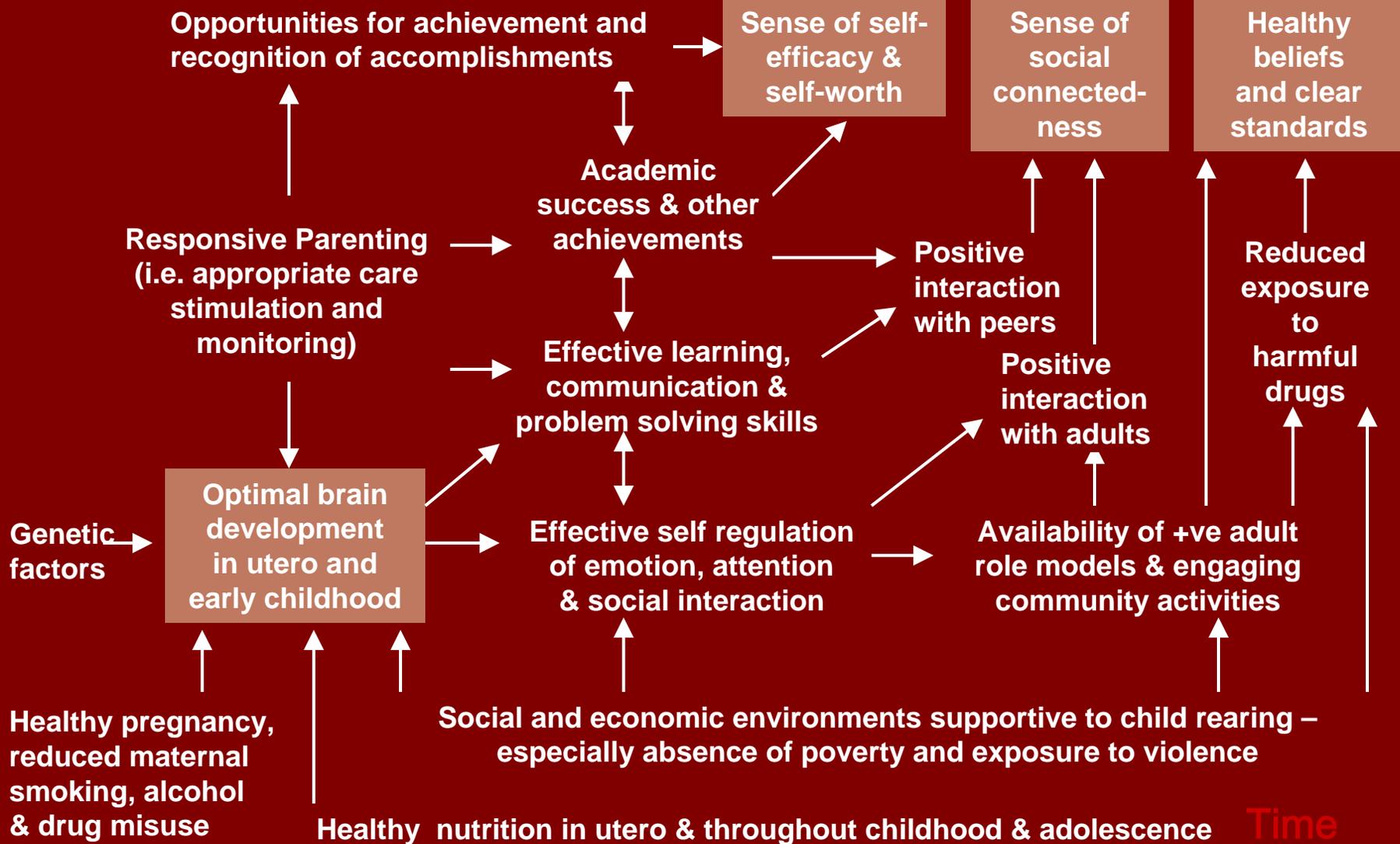


BUILDING BLOCKS



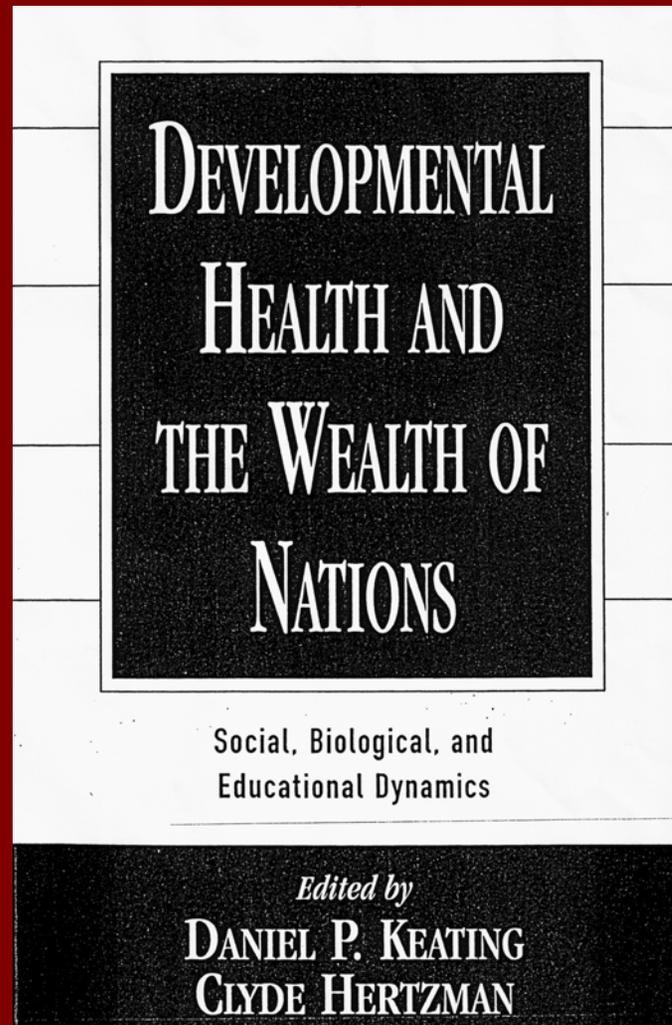
Pathways to Resilience (Silburn, 2003)

Personal achievement,
social competence and
emotional resilience





Developmental Health and the Wealth of Nations





**New Investigators Network
(core and broader members)
Senior Researchers (Mentors) and International Advisory Group**

will utilize

Data Development and Training Centre

to facilitate

**Research on Strategies to Raise and
Level the Bar**

1. Safeguard the health development of babies;
2. Strengthen early childhood education;
3. Improve schools and local communities;
4. Reduce socio economic segregation and the effects of poverty, and;
5. Create a family enabling society.

to inform
policy
and
practice

**Action
Research
Program**

to
further
understand

**Unified and
Comprehensive
Monitoring
System**

which leads to

Knowledge Transfer Strategy

which leads to a

which leads to a

to provide

Information for the New Economy

**Source: Canadian
Institute of Advanced
Research (2003)**



UK – Early Years Budget

- 200% increase in investment in last 6 years
- Focus on outcomes
- Cost/benefit emphasis on 1:7 ratio
- Sure Start initiative: Targets set nationally, strategies determined by community partnerships
 - 524 Sure Start programmes by 2004
 - 400,000 children in disadvantaged areas
 -  Children's Centres in disadvantaged areas
- £435M for more & higher quality child care (2003/4 - 2005/6)



Tipping Point in UK

- United voice across childrens' sectors
- Support of Chancellor of Exchequer and PM
- Child and youth programs run out of Treasury
- Linked to Social Exclusion Unit within Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Acknowledged as essential investment for future national economic and social capacity



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Modernity's Paradox: Australian Implications

- Increasing wealth, opportunity....
.....Increasing social disparity
.....Increasing problems in children & youth

Source : Keating & Hertzman (1999)



Indicators of Poor Developmental Health which are Increasing in Australian Children and Youth

- **Health Outcomes**
 - Low birth weight
 - Complex diseases (asthma, diabetes, obesity)
 - Mental Health problems, suicide
- **Lifestyle risk factors**
 - Child abuse/neglect/domestic violence
 - Behavioural problems, substance abuse
- **Others**
 - Juvenile crime
 - Learning disorders
 - Disabilities (intellectual, physical)

Source: Stanley, 2000 Millennium Year Book



Characteristics of Child and Youth Problems

- Associated with disadvantage
- Social gradients increasing however most affected children and youth in middle income groups
- Costly or unable to treat / manage
- Creating crisis in health, mental health, education, family services and justice
- No indication of improvements
- Complex causes but share common antecedents



Changes in Australian Society

Families, Children, Neighbourhoods

- Divorce, single parents, blended families
- Conflict, violence, isolation, homelessness
- Smaller families, contraction of the extended family
- Mothers working, childcare
- Hours of work, work stress, work mobility
- Children needing fostering
- Child abuse and neglect
- Insecure neighbourhoods, decreased connections
- Decreased social capital (trust, cooperation, civic engagements & reciprocity)

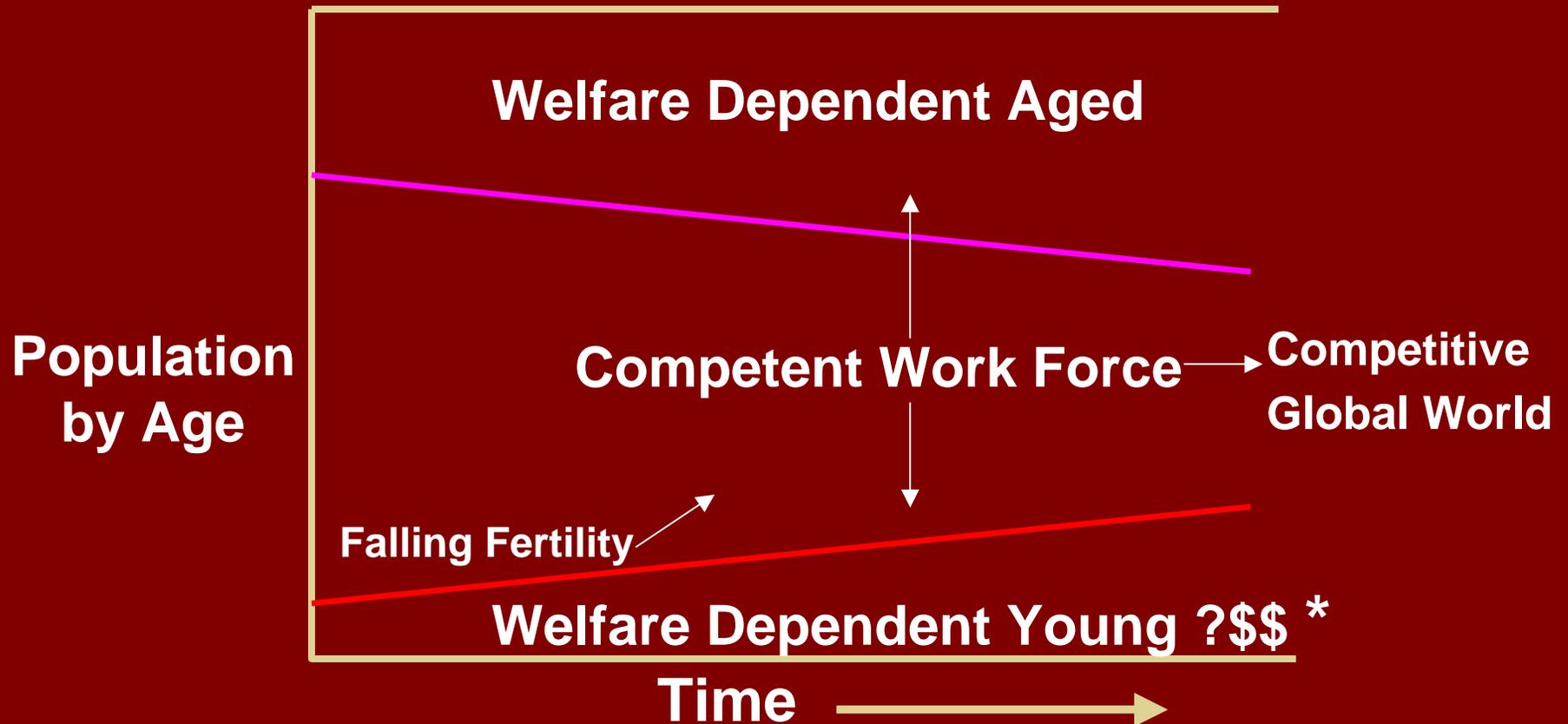


Ecological Factors Influencing Disorganised Child Development

| Distal | Proximal |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Market deregulation | Biological dysmaturations |
| Socio-economic inequality | Less stable attachments |
| Extended work preparation | Poor parental skills |
| Increased mobility | Low levels social support |
| Increased work | Poor quality care |
| Increased family re-formation | Drug & alcohol abuse |
| | Family conflict, stress, violence |
| | Erosion of social capital |



Implications of “Modernity’s Paradox” for Australia’s Future Economy & Prosperity



* There is a potential multi billion dollar variation in this gap which depends on governments’ policy response to this “epidemic”.



3

**Towards a Strong, Prosperous
and
Egalitarian Society**



Developmental Economics

“From Child Development to Human Development” *

- Economic shift from planning models to investing in people
- 4 critical pathways:
 - Education
 - Health
 - Social capital
 - Equality
- Early child development to human development to economic growth & prosperity

Source: *van der Gaag, World Bank, 2000



The Good News!

Child Development & Economic Prosperity

- New knowledge about child developmental health & wellbeing
- Social **AND** biological factors important in early life (families, communities, government, non-government)
- Clear evidence of what works to enhance development & resilience – positive impact across whole of life
- Cycle of disadvantage can be broken by early interventions (eg Head Start, USA; Sure Start UK)
- Demands urgent government, non-government & private sector participation



Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth:

Purpose

A national collaboration established to facilitate, coordinate and support the development of knowledge and its effective use to enhance the well-being and life chances of children and young people.



Key Activities of the Alliance

National capacity to turn knowledge into action

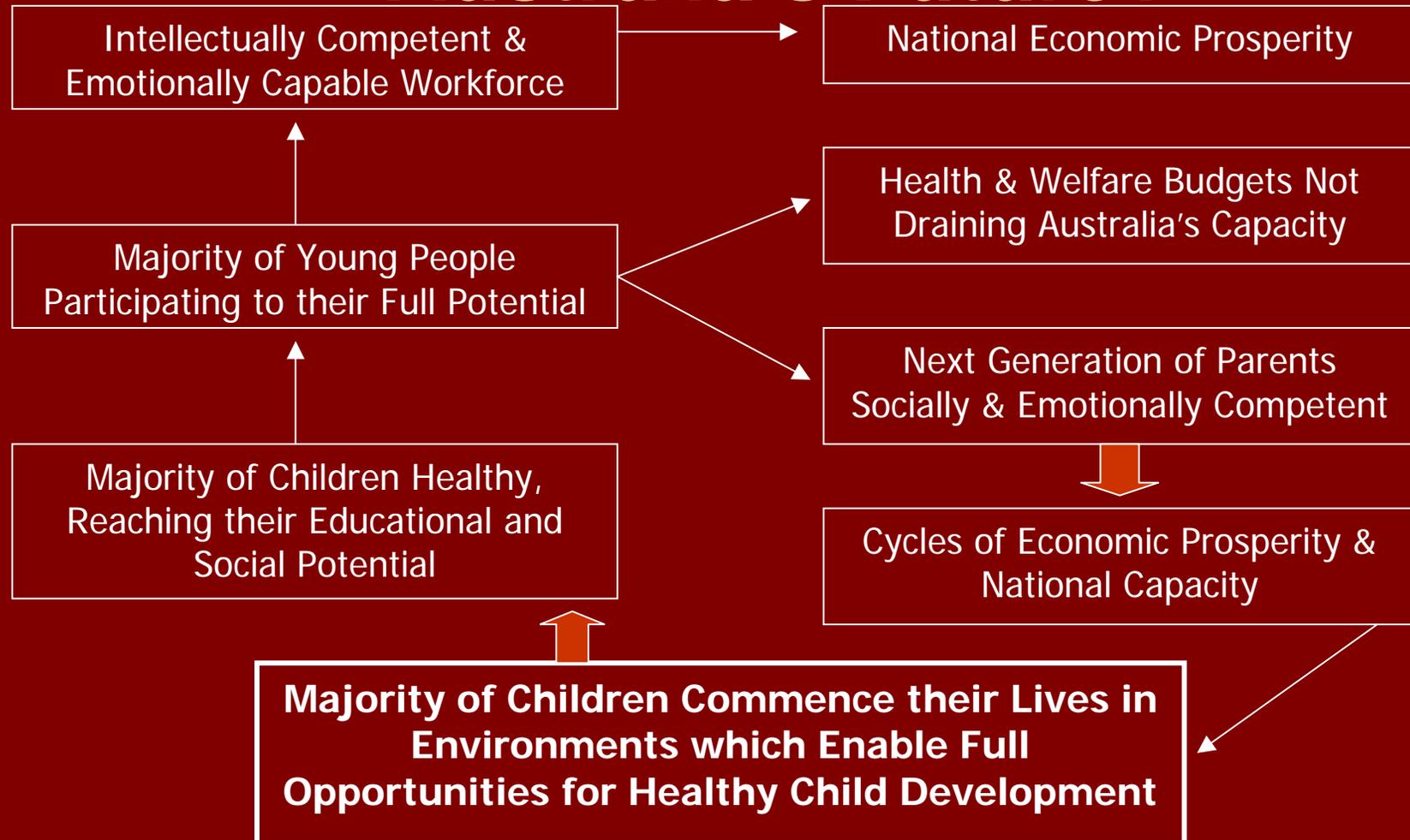
- **Build the network for**
 - Collaboration across perspectives and sectors
 - Sharing data and information
 - Knowledge development and dissemination
- **Focus the collaborative effort**
 - National Agenda: Children and Youth
 - What works?
 - Research ↔ Policy (eg HIV/AIDS)
↙ Practice ↘
 - Focus on children's futures
- **Build the infrastructure to support "evidence into action"**
 - National data network
 - Clearing house of evidence
 - Models of good practice

A photograph of two young Indigenous Australian children standing outdoors. The child on the left is wearing a red and black striped shirt and is pointing towards the camera with both hands. The child on the right is wearing a blue shirt and is also pointing towards the camera with one hand. The background is slightly blurred, showing some greenery and a fence.

**Why is child development
crucial for opportunity &
prosperity in Australia in
the 21st century?**



Why is Child Health & Development Crucial for Australia's Future?



BUILDING BLOCKS



First World Bank Conference on Early Child Development (1996)

“It is never too early to
become involved but
it can easily be too late”

Mamphela Ramphela
Managing Director
World Bank



Further Details

For further details about the
Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth
including Membership Forms:

www.aracy.org.au