

ANONYMOUS 17182 - New submission from Early Years Strategy - Public Submissions

The wellbeing of children in their early years is of critical importance because they are at their most vulnerable and because it shapes them. Trauma or neglect in these critical years causes long term damage. Children need to be cared for and this is primarily done by the parents. As such this strategy needs to support parents to do the best job they can. It is essential that parents' physical and mental health is as good as possible so that they can parent as well as they possibly can. Investing resources to care for children and their caregivers will pay dividends. The cost and availability of mental health and physical health services is a barrier to access. The public hospital system does not adequately prepare expecting and new parents for the challenges of looking after a newborn or the services that are available to help. Many many new parents would benefit from ongoing visits and support from someone who could offer advice, support, encouragement and link them to services in the months following the birth of their child. Identifying issues early and providing help quickly would mean that babies are protected from long term problems, either their own health and development or issues with caregivers. Investing financially in a targeted service or services to support new parents would return the benefits of happier healthier kids and families who are better positioned to look after themselves long term. I think an approach of prioritising disadvantaged groups but providing services to everyone would ensure that no children get missed. Teachers, early childhood educators, social workers, doctors, nurses all have an important role to play and should be consulted and adequately resourced. There is a lot of evidence that says the first 2 years after birth are foundational for brain development and so these years in particular should be prioritised. A joined up approach to ensure that services are accessible to everyone who needs them is essential. This strategy will be important for helping the most vulnerable Australians.