

EARLY YEARS STRATEGY DISCUSSION PAPER

Questions	Responses
1. Do you have any comments on the proposed structure of the Strategy?	The Vision should drive the Policy Prioities which will lead to Outcomes with underpinning Indicators.
2. What vision should our nation have for Australia's youngest children?	<p>The vision needs to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equitable access to universally free quality early childhood education and care; • Availability of Paid parental leave for 18 months- postpartum, and shared between the parents of equal amounts; • Early childhood teachers and educators must be highly qualified, competent and paid a respectable salary in line with primary and secondary teachers and educators, and with work conditions that match; • First nations' perspectives should be embedded throughout the Strategy.
3. What mix of outcomes are the most important to include in the Strategy?	All children are given the opportunity to reach their full potential in all aspects of development including physical, social, emotional, spiritual, cognitive and language domains, with optimum health care and education regardless of income or geographical location.
4. What specific areas/policy priorities should be included in the Strategy and why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal access for all children to free high quality early childhood education and care; • Invstment in the Australain early childhood eudcaiton and care workforce; • Reduce the siloing for children to access holistic development.
5. What could the Commonwealth do to improve outcomes for children— particularly those who are born or raised in more vulnerable and/or disadvantaged circumstances?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide universal access for all children to free high quality early childhood education and care; • Address workforce issues and shortages for ECEC workforce and allied health professionals. • Improve access to wrap-around health and well-being services, quality ECEC services and early intervention readily available with no wait time. Provide funding for transdisciplinary teams especially for the vulnerable and disafdvantages grounds; • Remove cost barriers and activity test and hours caps on access to wrap around health and wellbeing services and ECEC.
6. What areas do you think the Commonwealth could focus on to improve coordination and collaboration in developing policies for children and families?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop, implement and retain national early childhood education and care terminology eg kindergarten means the year before school; • The National government becomes the employer of alle arly childhood teachers and educators and pays them accordingly with the same work conditions. Funding is no



	<p>longer sent to the early childhood centres. Ensure all early childhood centres prioritise provision of quality early childhood education and care and not profit making.</p>
<p>7. What principles should be included in the Strategy?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continuity of care pre-natally into schooling;• Child and family voices in decision making;• Principles of equity, quality, accessibility and affordability in all decision making;• Meeting the UN convention on the rights of the child in decision making;• Inclusion and visibility of a diversity of voices;• Strength-based approaches that acknowledge diverse ways of knowing, doing and being.
<p>8. Are there gaps in existing frameworks or other research or evidence that need to be considered for the development of the Strategy?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Strategy can only happen if the ECEC workforce is well qualified, with adequate EC teachers, educators, and therapists, who are well paid with good work conditions.• Embedding of First Nations concepts on knowing, being and doing and approaches to learning. Consultation should take place with place with SNAICC and other relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.
<p>General comments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is reference to 'high quality early childhood programs' – while this is essential, what components are reflected here to achieve high quality? The ECEC workforce needs to underpin this Strategy- currently there is a shortage of ECEC teachers and educators across Australia.• The transition beyond birth to five settings into the next stage of schooling should be acknowledged.• While the overall structure of the strategy looks good, it is very generic, so it is hard to comment on at this time.