

## The Parenthood's Submission to the National Early Years Strategy

April 2023

"Children are the future of Australia so ensuring they are nurtured to reach their full potential is in the nation's best interests.

For children to thrive, parents and families need support."

██████████, Patron of The Parenthood

### OVERVIEW

The Parenthood welcomes the opportunity to make a submission and strongly supports the Australian government's commitment to a holistic, integrated, whole-of-government Commonwealth Early Years Strategy. The commitment from the Federal Government – Minister Amanda Rishworth and Minister Anne Aly in particular – to improve how we approach early childhood development and support young children and their families is welcome and significant.

The Parenthood strongly supports comments from the Prime Minister, Treasurer and Ministers that recognise the profound value and significance of the first five years and the importance of support for children and families, and the workforce dedicated to young children and families.

We commend the Australian government's commitment to making quality early childhood education and care more accessible and affordable for all children and families, and the Prime Minister's vision for truly universal early childhood education and care (ECEC).

The Parenthood is an independent advocacy organisation that represents over 80,000 parents and caregivers around Australia. Our mission is, quite deliberately, to make Australia the best place in the world to be a parent, because it is only when parents and caregivers are supported that children can thrive. The Parenthood has consistently advocated an ambitious, strategic, coordinated, evidence-based approach to policies impacting families and children in the early years.

Under the current system early childhood development services and support for families is too often inaccessible, confusing, complex and unaffordable. This is exacerbated for children and families who need it most.

Parenting and raising children matters. Every child, in every household, shapes our future. In raising children, parents and carers, communities and nations have the future in their hands. By the age of 5, 90% of a child's brain is fully

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developed<sup>i</sup>. The early years set the foundations for life long optimal health, educational<sup>ii</sup>, wellbeing and economic outcomes<sup>iii</sup>.

It is time to recognise this period of profound vulnerability, opportunity and development with commensurate investment, ambition and commitment. An ambitious, coordinated National Early Years Strategy which will devise and deliver a world-leading, integrated, universal Early Childhood Development (ECD) system that caters for all children, families, and communities is required.

It will represent the most transformative health, social and economic reform in Australia since the introduction of Medicare. It will address the growing disparities in child health and wellbeing that were exacerbated by the Covid pandemic<sup>iv</sup>, and ensure all parents and carers are supported themselves to help ensure every child is nurtured to reach their full potential<sup>v</sup>.

At the National Early Years Summit in February 2022 there was notable consensus among delegates and speakers on the following themes:

1. An integrated, coordinated and ambitious approach to ECD is not just critical but urgent.
2. Early intervention and prevention are key. The cost of failing children and their families in the early years far exceeds the upfront cost of investing in an integrated ECD system.
3. Supporting and empowering parents, carers, families and communities is essential to ensuring the health, social, emotional, developmental and educational needs of children are met in the early years.
4. Wellbeing needs to be measured;
5. The necessity of inclusion, particularly for culturally and linguistically diverse and First Nations peoples, and children with disability is paramount;
6. Accountability of public policy is crucial; and
7. Universality is critical but does not mean uniform: approaches must be responsive to local contexts and communities.

The Early Years Strategy is an opportunity for truly nation-building reform that will underwrite a more prosperous, sustainable and equitable Australia.

## **The Parenthood's primary recommendations are:**

**Recommendation 1:** The Early Years Strategy adopts the bold vision to make Australia the best place in the world to be a parent and raise a child.

**Recommendation 2:** The Early Years Strategy creates a nationwide guarantee for young children and their families to a suite of supports and services in the early years, with additional targeted support for those who need it.

**Recommendation 3.** Universal, quality and inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care should sit at the heart of the Early Years Strategy, as the backbone of a quality Early Childhood Development system.

**Recommendation 4:** The Early Childhood Development workforce is properly funded and supported.

**Recommendation 5.** The Early Years Strategy should ultimately encompass all levels of Government.

**Recommendation 6.** The Early Years Strategy is underpinned by principles of Accountability, Prevention, Universality and Inclusion & Wellbeing

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **1. The Early Years Strategy adopts the bold vision to make Australia the best place in the world to be a parent and raise a child.**

Australia currently lags developed countries in the provision of best practice, evidence-based policies that optimally support children, parents and families<sup>vi</sup>. This leads to negative social and economic outcomes including poorer educational and health outcomes for children and lower lifetime earnings; poorer health and wellbeing outcomes for parents; reduced participation in the workforce, particularly for women; and lower rates of fertility that undermine long-term sustainability of government finances.

At present, one in six Australian children live in poverty and one in five start school developmentally vulnerable<sup>vii</sup> and children who start behind their peers rarely catch up. Australia is ranked 32 out of 38 wealthy countries on child wellbeing measures. The long term cost in social, health and economic terms to children, families, communities and the nation from failing in the early years is catastrophic. In 2019, before the Covid19 pandemic exacerbated disparities in child wellbeing, the price Australia pays for not providing the requisite early support to children and families, or late intervention, was estimated at \$15 billion annually<sup>viii</sup>.

The health, development and wellbeing of young children is inextricably linked with the health and wellbeing of their parents and caregivers. Twenty per cent of mothers experience depression and anxiety in the perinatal period (being pregnancy and the first year of parenthood), which is linked with adverse outcomes for children<sup>ix</sup>. Suicide is one of the leading causes of maternal death in Australia<sup>x</sup>.

For children to thrive and lead happy, healthy and productive lives, they need support, and so do their parents and carers<sup>xi</sup>. Children fare best when they are well nourished, responsively cared for, have access to learning opportunities from birth onwards and are protected from disease, violence and stress<sup>xii</sup>.

ARACY's child wellbeing framework, the Nest, reflects extensive evidence of the dimensions of child wellbeing and identifies six critical domains:<sup>xiii</sup>

- Valued, Loved and Safe – trusting relationships with family and friends, nurtured by caring adults, and protected from immediate and longer term dangers, including climate change.
- Material Basics – having sufficient family income, secure and suitable housing, appropriate clothing, nutritious food, clean water, and clean air.
- Healthy – physical, mental, and emotional health needs are met.

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- Learning – learning through a variety of experiences within the classroom, the home, and the community in which they live.
- Participating – having a voice, being listened to and having a say in decisions that impact them.
- Positive Sense of Identity and Culture – feeling safe and supported to express their identity and have a sense of belonging.

Being a world leader in how we support young children and their families is the benchmark to which Australia’s Early Years Strategy must aspire. It cannot be achieved without significant investment and bold reform to how governments approach decision-making.

An ambitious and integrated Early Years Strategy designed to make Australia the best place in the world to be a child will pursue evidence-based policies and practices that deliberately encompass all six domains of child wellbeing. The profound health, social and educational benefits from optimally supporting children and families in the early years will yield rich economic rewards across generations<sup>xiv</sup>.

Successful early childhood development policies are holistic, integrated and focus on equipping families with the time, resources, knowledge, and skills to provide nurturing care in the early years. Universal access to quality and comprehensive primary and allied health services in the early years is critical - but not exhaustive.

During the prenatal period and the first year of a child’s life, health is the primary universal system that families interact with, being particularly important. A world leading Early Years Strategy will support the integration of health, ECEC, and other services. The physical co-location of child and family centres and early education services, where possible, creates greater collaboration between professionals and has been associated with improved engagement and access for children and families.<sup>xv</sup> There is compelling evidence that Child and Family Hubs can play a valuable role in offering “a non-stigmatising ‘front door’ for families to access a range of co-located and virtual services and supports”.<sup>xvi</sup>

Delivering on the Early Years Strategy will necessitate new ways of working for governments to deliver holistic, long-term, ambitious policy that cuts across departments and levels of government.

In addition to specific ECD-measures the National Early Years Strategy must have regard to policies to redress poverty. The Parenthood advocates the end of policy-induced poverty for all children in Australia through increases to Parenting Payment and JobSeeker for partnered parents in jobless families, and implementing the recommendations made by the interim Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee and Women’s Economic Equality Taskforce.

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## **2. The Early Years Strategy creates a nationwide guarantee for young children and their families to a suite of supports and services in the early years, with additional targeted support for those who need it.**

The Parenthood's 2021 research report, [Making Australia The Best Place In The World To Be a Parent](#), presents a coordinated framework of best-practice policies and practices that create conditions in which parents, families and children can thrive. These include:

- universal health and wellbeing support for parents and children through pregnancy, birth and the early years;
- one year of paid parental leave at a replacement wage rate, with super, shared between parents;
- free and high-quality Early Childhood Education and Care, delivered by a properly paid and secure workforce, for all; and
- flexible and supportive workplaces with universal access to paid carers' leave for sick children.

This framework reflects the profound nexus between policies, practices and services that help support the physical and mental health, wellbeing and security of parents and caregivers, as a means of supporting the health, wellbeing and development of children in the early years.

Extensive evidence and consultation around the need to create an ecosystem of supports and services for young children and families informs the Guarantee for young children and families in the Centre for Policy Development's Starting Better Report (2021)<sup>xvii</sup>. A child's access to the guarantee doesn't rely or reduce based on the actions of the adults in their lives. The core elements of the Guarantee are:

- more paid parental leave (up to 52 weeks per family), shared between partners;
- universal access to maternal and child health care, consistent across all states and territories, with additional support for families who need it;
- three days (up to 30 hours) of free or low-cost high-quality early childhood education and care per week as soon as families want it, with additional days for those who need it at minimal cost.
- universal access to three days (or 30 hours) of low or no cost quality preschool education for two years before school;
- a wraparound "navigator" service for families who need extra help to find and access suitable supports, as part of integrated whole-of-family early childhood service delivery; and

- better mechanisms to provide seamless support for children from the day they are born, including more effective transitions from early learning to primary school.

The Starting Better Guarantee creates a universal entitlement to a suite of high-quality, affordable and connected services in the early years, which forms the baseline of support for all children and allows for targeted additional support. It “combines universal services to help all children thrive (parental leave in line with global best practice, maternal and child health, early childhood education and care, including preschool and the early years of primary school), with bespoke layers of support for families to customise to their needs and aspirations”<sup>xviii</sup>.

The blueprint for implementation is there. The full implementation of the guarantee would make Australia one of the best places in the world to be a parent and raise a child, and should form the basis of a core entitlement in the National Early Years Strategy.

### **3. Universal, quality and inclusive ECEC should sit at the heart of the Early Years Strategy, as the backbone of a quality ECD system.**

Quality, inclusive ECEC has a profound positive and enduring impact on a child’s development and their future learning and economic outcomes. It is a critical component of a child’s education and sets children up for lifelong success. In addition to boosting child development outcomes and educational achievement, making quality ECEC more accessible and affordable enables parents to more readily participate in paid work which supports their ability to meet the material needs of their children and families.

Australia lags the OECD average in access, participation, affordability and investment in early childhood education and care. A PWC report commissioned by The Front Project in 2019 concluded that \$2 of benefits flow for every \$1 spent on early childhood education<sup>xix</sup>. Disadvantaged children stand to benefit most and the return on investment is greater than 2:1.

Children who attend quality ECEC for at least a year before starting school are half as likely to have developmental vulnerabilities when they start school as children who have not<sup>xx</sup>. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are twice as likely to arrive at school with developmental vulnerabilities, and half as likely to attend an ECEC program, as non-Indigenous children.

Despite success in lifting enrolments of children in preschool programs in the year before school (four year olds) Australia is in the bottom third of countries ranked by the OECD in relation to enrolment of three-year-olds. Participation of

four-year olds in ECEC in Australia is significantly lower than in the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Norway<sup>xxi</sup>.

The cost of ECEC is very high: among OECD countries Australia has the 4th most expensive fees<sup>xxii</sup>. Out-of-pocket fees for ECEC absorb about a quarter of household income for an average earning couple with two young children in Australia<sup>xxiii</sup>. Even before the COVID19 pandemic hit and the cost of living escalated, half of Australian parents with children under five struggled with the cost of ECEC.

The Parenthood shares the view of organisations including the Centre for Policy Development, Thrive By Five and Goodstart Early Learning that high-quality universal ECEC is the natural backbone of a well-connected ECD system which includes universal health services.

A quality and truly universal ECEC system will improve child development, lift educational outcomes, tackle entrenched disadvantage, improve gender equity, boost productivity, strengthen communities and grow our national economic competitiveness. The Prime Minister has noted such reform has the potential to transform Australia in the way Medicare did.

The Prime Minister pledged his commitment to universality of early childhood education and care in his election night speech in May 2022. The Productivity Commission has commenced its inquiry into “solutions that will chart the course for universal, affordable ECEC”.

The Parenthood supports a minimum child-level entitlement to three days free or low-cost, high quality ECEC for all Australian children, with up to five days for children who would benefit from more, as contained in CPD’s Starting Better Guarantee. A three-day entitlement could be implemented immediately by providing all children a minimum activity test result of 72 hours per fortnight while longer term reform and financing options are developed by the Productivity Commission.

A universal service that children regularly attend provides an ideal connection point for children and families with other health and child development services. This can reduce the stress and create simplicity for parents and families navigating complex services and supports.

Universality is key and has critical benefits, particularly for children and families experiencing disadvantage. Countries with legal entitlements to universal ECEC tend to have high attendance rates from the age of entitlement. By reducing administrative barriers and stigma, and creating a simple and reliable system that families understand and feel confident to use, universal services are effective in removing obstacles to entry.<sup>xxiv</sup>



Universal is not uniform. 'Proportionate universalism', whereby services are available to all children, but delivered with an intensity and a scale that is proportionate to their level of need and using a delivery model that works for their circumstances, is key.

Policy and service development should actively seek to reduce disadvantage and have regard to diverse social, cultural and economic factors which influence child and family outcomes and experiences within early childhood settings.

Immediate action should be taken to abolish and Activity Test and increase the Additional Child Care Subsidy – Child Wellbeing Certificate length to at least 13 weeks and grant all children in out-of-home care (foster care) 12-month determinations (even if reunified with family) while longer term reform and financing options to support children at risk are considered by the Productivity Commission.

#### **4. The ECD workforce is properly funded and supported.**

The National Early Years Strategy must be supported by a fully funded workforce strategy. Quality in all aspects of ECD is vital for children and families to receive the full benefit from services and support. Any high-quality ECD system is underpinned by a highly skilled and valued workforce. Realising the vision in the Early Years Strategy will depend upon a skilled, supported and sustainable pipeline of early childhood professionals: the workforce is the strategy.

Appropriate and secure funding for the ECD workforce that enables the pay, conditions and career development opportunities for early childhood teachers, educators, nurses and other early years professionals, to reflect the important role they play is critical.

Well-qualified, well-supported educators are essential to providing high-quality ECEC<sup>xxv</sup>. Building workforce capability in ECEC was identified as a key initiative in improving the quality of early learning in the Lifting our Game report.<sup>xxvi</sup> The current crisis affecting the ECEC workforce with record vacancies, high staff turnover and inadequate pay and conditions poses an immediate challenge in maintaining the current national universal access to early childhood education as well as ensuring early childhood services meet the National Quality Framework. The quality of the workforce has a direct impact on the experiences of children.

It is vital to address the supply and retention of suitably qualified teachers and educators, particularly in rural and remote areas, to ensure there is a pipeline of future teachers in place for a national roll-out of three year old programs,

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provide professional development and support, and build a continuous learning culture to underpin quality improvement in programming and pedagogy in early childhood education.

Immediate action to improve the pay of educators and teachers in early learning is critical. The Commonwealth and state/territory governments should work together to build the ECD workforce pipeline.

We need a long-term strategy and have to address wages and conditions – for ECEC but also other parts of the system – such as family support services. We should aim to achieve parity with schools and health systems and build long term capability and a strong sense of professional identity for professionals working with young children and families.

## **5. The Early Years Strategy should ultimately encompass all levels of Government.**

A truly transformative Early Years Strategy necessitates the involvement of a range of actors, including States and Territories, local governments, non-government organisations, and communities. A nationally consistent vision and minimum entitlement to support and services for children and families, regardless of where they live, will require strategic national leadership and coordination.

The Parenthood commends the Commonwealth Government’s focus on breaking down silos and the acknowledgement that there is significant room for improvement in how children and families are supported across Australian Government portfolios.

No single government or agency has the authority and responsibility to govern early childhood development in Australia.

The relevant policy and delivery levers to implement meaningful ECD reform are scattered across different levels of government, jurisdictions and portfolios. “No single agency or level of government has the capacity or breadth of services to meet the needs of children and families. National collaboration must be based on the understanding that all Australian governments shape the ECD system through strategic vision, policy settings, quality assurance, budgetary priorities, and investment.”<sup>xxvii</sup>

An Early Years Strategy that doesn’t look to coordinate and integrate Commonwealth and the state/territory Government roles and responsibilities will be a missed opportunity, particularly given the once-in-a-generation shared focus on early childhood by State and Territory Governments across Australia<sup>xxviii</sup>.

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The national vision for ECEC currently being developed by the National Cabinet should be the beginning of a strong foundation to deliver a national strategy that articulates a shared aspiration for all Australian children and drives nationally coordinated, cross-sector action towards this.

The last National Early Childhood Development Strategy, developed by the Council of Australian Governments in 2009 at a similar time of structural, sector-wide reform provided a clear framework for coordinated and measurable action by all jurisdictions to improve child outcomes and in turn increase social inclusion, human capital and productivity in Australia.<sup>xxix</sup> This included national partnerships to implement the National Quality Framework, a fully funded National Workforce Strategy and the commitment by all states and territories to introduce 15 hours of preschool via the National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education.

## **6. The Early Years Strategy is underpinned by principles of Accountability, Prevention, Universality and Inclusion & Wellbeing**

### **Accountability**

The Early Years Strategy must articulate a commitment to all children in Australia and provide a mechanism to create accountability for delivering on that commitment. It should include child level entitlements, which are enshrined in law and not dependent on the work, income or Visa status of the adults in their lives.

The strategy must be supported by well-defined governance arrangements that clearly attribute accountability for achieving outcomes to the relevant Commonwealth Minister.

The Strategy and its vision should be an umbrella that various government and community reform processes work to achieve. It could provide a unifying framework for current government reform processes and greater clarity about how they fit together. This could be achieved by enshrining the Strategy's goals or aims in legislation, strong cross-agency governance arrangements and accountability mechanisms to embed it in government decision-making and actions.

In line with the National Vision of ECEC under development, Governments must take a holistic approach as stewards of the early childhood system in partnership with the sector, shaping a nationally coherent system that is connected and responsive to community needs and outcomes for families, providers, and the workforce.

### **Prevention**

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Investment in prevention costs less than preventing the harm from occurring in the first place. Prioritising and embedding a preventative approach in the Early Years Strategy is as critical. The CPD's Starting Better report sets out major long-term societal benefits of intervening early through preventative policies, such as high-quality universal ECEC. These include higher educational attainment, improved overall health, and reduced crime. Starting Better modelled returns of up to \$18.8 billion from tax revenue and savings benefits, and a \$10 billion annual boost to GDP.

## **Universality and Inclusion**

The development of an Early Years Strategy is an opportunity for the Commonwealth Government to map a pathway to an integrated, universal and inclusive early childhood system that embeds the support that children need where they spend their time.

The Early Years Strategy must remove barriers with particular regard to the groups of children for whom the barriers to ECD and ECEC services are currently highest. These include:

- Children at risk of abuse, harm or neglect;
- Children with additional needs;
- First Nations children;
- Children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; and
- Children in rural and remote Australia.

There should be demonstrated cultural competency in the planning and delivery of responsive, inclusive early childhood policy and services, which reflects the diversity in the local community and actively seeks out the views of those who are underrepresented within the early childhood service system.

Services need to be delivered in a way that reduces the risk of children and families falling through gaps, reduces unnecessary duplication and complexity and promotes greater information sharing between all actors in the system.

Universal does not mean uniform: universality is the platform upon which the guaranteed suite of services and supports are provided, and tailored services can be stacked.

The Parenthood defers to advice from First Nations Leaders and supports the Voice to Parliament. We also support moves to grow the community-controlled sector to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families & communities realise their ambitions for their children.



## Wellbeing

“It is really important that we measure what matters in our economy in addition to all of the traditional measures. Not instead of, but in addition to. I do want to have better ways to measure progress, and to measure the intergenerational consequences of our policies.” – Treasurer Jim Chalmer, October 2022.

There is growing recognition, domestically and internationally, of the need for nations to measure wellbeing markers in conjunction with traditional economic markers. The Measuring what Matters initiative within the Australian Treasury is seeking to develop a national framework to measure progress and wellbeing.

Given the significance of the wellbeing of children in social and economic terms in the short and long term, wellbeing and the early years are inextricably linked. The Early Years Strategy is an opportunity to embed and integrate a wellbeing approach to policy making in Australia.

Scotland<sup>xxx</sup>, New Zealand<sup>xxxii</sup> and Wales<sup>xxxiii</sup> have each introduced and enshrined principles to be considered when developing policy affecting children through a wellbeing lens.

Common themes include:

- holistic
- outcomes-oriented
- rights-based
- long-term and upstream; and
- preventative.

Wales has introduced an accountability mechanism to ensure that all government decisions are aligned to seven national wellbeing goals in the “Well-being of Future Generations Act”<sup>xxxiii</sup>. Incorporating similar principles – including holistic, rights-based, long-term and upstream and preventative - in legislation in Australia would ensure that government policy and decision-making supports current and future generations of children to thrive.

The Early Years Strategy would be substantially strengthened by taking a wellbeing approach that is inherently holistic, outcomes-oriented, rights-based, long-term, and preventative.

## ENGAGEMENT

Thank you for the opportunity to submit. The Parenthood would welcome the opportunity for further engagement. Please contact [REDACTED]

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- <sup>i</sup> Center on the Developing Child (2007), *The Science of Early Childhood Development* (InBrief).
- <sup>ii</sup> Brennan and Pascoe (2017), *Lifting our Game*.
- <sup>iii</sup> Mitchell Institute. *Preschool – Two Years are Better Than One*. 2016.
- <sup>iv</sup> Potential indirect impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children: a narrative review using a community child health lens, Sharon Goldfeld, Elodie O'Connor, Valerie Sung, Gehan Roberts, Melissa Wake, Sue West and Harriet Hiscock, *Med J Aust* || doi: 10.5694/mja2.51368
- <sup>v</sup> Equity Economics, *Making Australia The Best Place In The World To Be a Parent*, 2021
- <sup>vi</sup> Equity Economics, *Making Australia The Best Place In The World To Be a Parent*, 2021
- <sup>vii</sup> Dept of Education and Training, AEDC, 2019
- <sup>viii</sup> Teagher, Fox and Stafford, 2019
- <sup>ix</sup> [https://gidgetfoundation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/GFA2019\\_WPP\\_DL\\_web.pdf](https://gidgetfoundation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/GFA2019_WPP_DL_web.pdf)
- <sup>x</sup> AIHW (2019), 'Maternal Deaths in Australia', <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/mothers-babies/maternal-deaths-in-australia/contents/maternal-deaths-in-australia>
- <sup>xi</sup> Equity Economics, *Making Australia The Best Place In The World To Be a Parent*, 2021
- <sup>xii</sup> [https://www.aracy.org.au/publications-resources/command/download\\_file/id/329/filename/Second\\_edition\\_The\\_Nest\\_action\\_agenda.pdf](https://www.aracy.org.au/publications-resources/command/download_file/id/329/filename/Second_edition_The_Nest_action_agenda.pdf)
- <sup>xiii</sup> <https://www.aracy.org.au/the-nest-in-action/the-nest-overview>.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Equity Economics, *Making Australia The Best Place In The World To Be a Parent*, 2021
- <sup>xv</sup> See, for example, Jose et. al (2021) *The Impact on Service Collaboration of Co-location of Early Childhood Services in Tasmanian Child and Family Centres: An Ethnographic Study*. *International Journal of Integrated Care* 21(2): 14, 1–13, and
- <sup>xvi</sup> For more information on child and family hubs, see Honisett et. al (2023) *Child and family hubs: an important 'front door' for equitable support for families across Australia*.
- <sup>xvii</sup> <https://cpd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CPD-Starting-Better-Report.pdf>
- <sup>xviii</sup> <https://cpd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CPD-Starting-Better-Report.pdf>
- <sup>xix</sup> The Front Project (2019), [A smart investment for a smarter Australia](#).
- <sup>xx</sup> Pascoe & Brennan (2017), *Lifting our Game*.
- <sup>xxi</sup> McKinsey Global Institute (2018), 'The Power of Parity: Advancing Women's Equality in Asia Pacific', p. 66. OECD Family Database data updated as at 2017
- <sup>xxii</sup> [https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/theparenthood/pages/669/attachments/original/1613473151/Final\\_Report\\_-\\_Making\\_Australia\\_The\\_Best\\_Place\\_In\\_The\\_World\\_To\\_Be\\_A\\_Parent.pdf?1613473151](https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/theparenthood/pages/669/attachments/original/1613473151/Final_Report_-_Making_Australia_The_Best_Place_In_The_World_To_Be_A_Parent.pdf?1613473151)
- <sup>xxiii</sup> <https://grattan.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Grattan-Institute-Recovery-Book.pdf>
- <sup>xxiv</sup> See, for example, Fox and Geddes (2016) *Preschool - Two Years are Better than One*, Mitchell Institute, McIsaac et al (2022) *The Perceived Value of a Universal Early Learning Program: A Parent Perspective*, *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, Cleveland (2022) *Accessibility and quality of child care services in Quebec*.
- <sup>xxv</sup> *Early Learning Everyone Benefits*. (2019). *State of Early Learning in Australia 2019*. Canberra: Early Childhood Australia. p. 28
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Pascoe & Brennan (2017)
- <sup>xxvii</sup> <https://cpd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CPD-Starting-Better-Report.pdf>
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Including, for example, including the NSW Governments [About the Early Years Commitment \(nsw.gov.au\)](#); [Giving Every Victorian Child The Best Start In Life | Premier of Victoria](#); [Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care](#), The Victorian Government [Best Start. Best Life](#) agenda, and the South Australian [Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care](#)
- <sup>xxix</sup> COAG, *Investing in the Early Years – A National Early Childhood Development Strategy*, July 2009, [https://www.startingblocks.gov.au/media/1104/national\\_ecd\\_strategy.pdf](https://www.startingblocks.gov.au/media/1104/national_ecd_strategy.pdf)
- <sup>xxx</sup> <https://childrenscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/BeingBold-Report.pdf>
- <sup>xxxi</sup> <https://www.childyouthwellbeing.govt.nz/our-aspirations/strategy-framework>
- <sup>xxxii</sup> <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/>
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> The goals are: A prosperous Wales; a resilient Wales; a more equal Wales; a healthier Wales; a Wales of cohesive communities; A Wales of vibrant culture & thriving Welsh language; and a globally responsible Wales.