

More than Money

A universal and equitable early learning system must include solutions to practical and non-financial barriers

Equitable and universal access to quality early learning equips children with the essential skills needed for a strong foundation and lifelong learning. It is also crucial to disrupting entrenched disadvantage. The children who stand to benefit the most from early learning are often the ones most likely to miss out, due to a number of barriers not related to fees.

Disability, language barriers, domestic and family violence, cultural differences and transportation challenges make up some of the various practical barriers families face to engaging with, enrolling in and maintaining attendance in early learning.

Even with fully subsidised early learning and care, 1 in 10 children will continue to be left behind. The Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Early Childhood Education and Care report provides a positive roadmap to a more equitable and universal early learning system. It recognises that the solutions to practical and non-financial barriers must be embedded in its design. To truly realise the social and economic benefits of early learning, we must ensure that our most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and families do not continue to miss out.

The Australian Government's Early Years Strategy highlights how critical the first five years of a child's life are for lifelong success and that we need 'joined up' thinking and planning to guarantee that the youngest members of our community (0-5) and their families can learn, grow and thrive. We are at a significant moment right now and on the cusp of historic reform that will impact generations to come.

We urge the Australian Government to accept the robust recommendations outlined in the Productivity Commission Report. Specifically, to provide additional investment in, and expansion of, the Inclusion Support Program (currently \$230m p.a.) of up to \$500m per year, and investment of around \$500m per year in an Inclusion Development Fund to unlock the potential to support more families and children who need it. We risk these children being locked out of early learning if the Productivity Commission's recommendations are not prioritised.

This investment would enable community-based linker programs and navigator models to reach the communities that need it most. We, the undersigned organisations, call on the Australian Government to commit to these solutions that are about More than Money.

Signed,

Uniting NSW.ACT
Goodstart Early Learning
NSW Council of Social Services (NCOSS)
The Hive
The Front Project
Guardian Childcare & Education
Nido Education
Early Childhood Management Services (ECMS)
UnitingCare Australia
Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY)

Uniting



the
FrontProject

Guardian
Childcare & Education

