Notes from the discussion with Professor Peter Høj, AC
Vice Chancellor of the University of Adelaide,
and
Dr. Rhiannon Pilkington and Professor John Lynch
for the
Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care
Tuesday 13 June, 2023

Supporting an Evidence-Based Early Years System Through Translational Research

Leverage existing SA linked data assets to support world-class research

- An early years data system needs to understand various system touch points that are key building blocks in developing better life chances for our next generation. This means we need to consider <u>data spanning not just ECEC, but also data spanning other systems such as health (e.g., ante- and post-natal care) and our social services like child protection, housing, and justice</u>. These additional data sources give crucial information about the characteristics of different populations who may need support through ECEC services, to enable our children have the best chance at thriving.

- The SA **B**etter **E**vidence, **B**etter **O**utcomes, **L**inked **D**ata (**BEBOLD**) platform includes de-identified, linked administrative data on all children and their parents in South Australia born 1991 onwards <u>spanning health, education, child development, justice and social services</u>. Professor Lynch and Dr Pilkington have spent over a decade building the BEBOLD platform and this is a rich and powerful de-identified South Australian social and health data asset. This platform can provide the backbone of an early years data system.

- Dr Pilkington and Prof Lynch have been working with the SA government and Australian Bureau of Statistics over the past 18 months to augment the BEBOLD platform with Commonwealth government data – having Centrelink and <u>Child Care Management System</u> data along with a wealth of other data sources including the <u>National Disability Data Asset.</u>

- This additional data will create a 'best practice' backbone of a powerful early years data system to support better outcomes for children in SA

Lead the Nation by resourcing an <u>Institute for the Early Years</u> to support an evidence-based approach to achieving better outcomes for children and families

- Consider viable funding models to support long-term investment such as setting up an 'Early Years Fund' of ~$40 million. The interest generated from this fund can be used to support the Institute with $1.5-2 million per annum (plus any additional operational costs to support building new data infrastructure that would need to be determined).

- The Institute would augment the existing BEBOLD data infrastructure by building and adding bespoke data collections related to new investments in the early years

- The Institute would undertake research to support strategic planning and investment, and to evaluate and monitor key supports and investments

- The data asset will be the foundational platform to support a trial into strategies to ensure 3-year old preschool is delivered to families and children in disadvantaged circumstances that would answer questions about our ability to "reach and retain" families in the most disadvantaged circumstances who are the most likely to benefit from high quality ECEC srvices.

Create a bridge between operational government agencies, government and non-government service providers and research

- The Institute will partner closely with the Office for the Early Years and the Office for Data Analytics to translate cohort-based de-identified research, into operational uses of identifiable data within government. BetterStart has done this sort of translational research with government partners before by identifying priority population cohorts.

- There is an opportunity for the Institute to support appropriate upskilling of government and service provider staff interested in developing research and data analytics skills to translate skill-building into early years system that can "learn" and engage in cycles of continuous quality improvement.