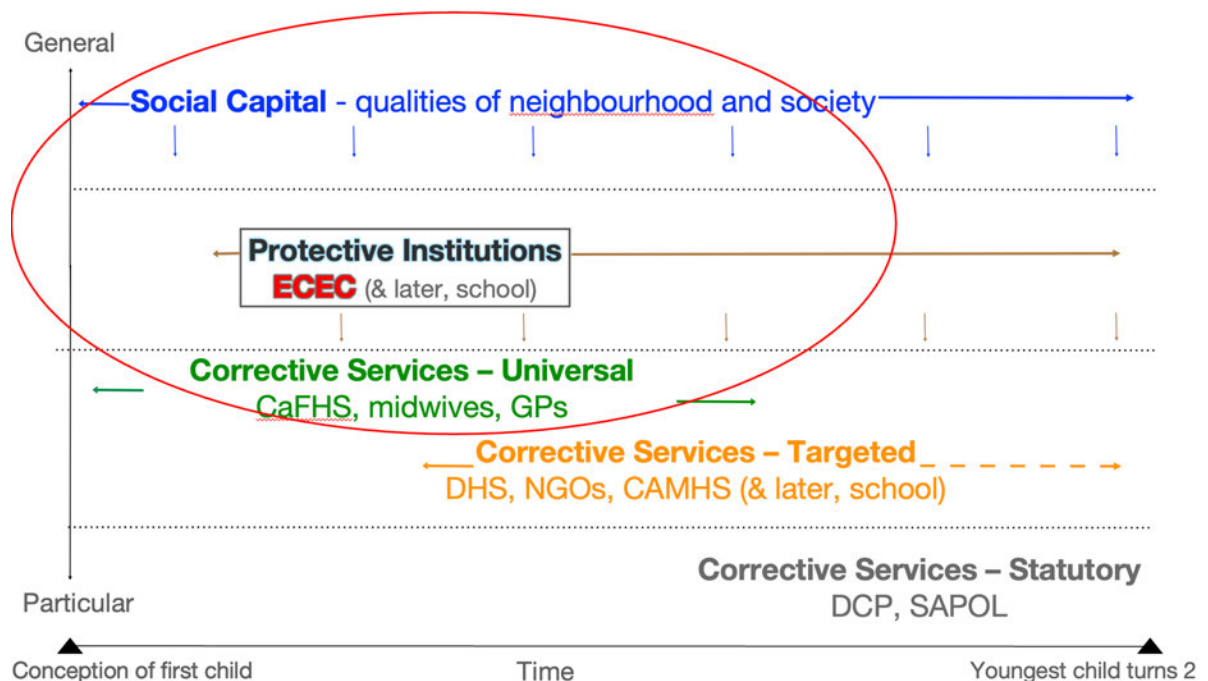


## Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education & Care First 1000 days Roundtable

As a child psychiatrist and advocate for child safety, I am concerned about the most vulnerable parents and infants, and with the social factors that determine their future. These are the infants at greatest risk of maltreatment and of subsequently developing poor mental health; infants who can however be protected and nurtured by the positive experience of quality education and care in that critical first thousand days from conception.

ECEC, and the vital role of this Royal Commission, are just as important for children's safety wellbeing and mental health as they are for educational and economic benefits. However, unless we address the social needs preventing engagement in ECEC, those who stand to benefit most will miss out.

Improving access is important, but it is no substitute for directly addressing social risks.



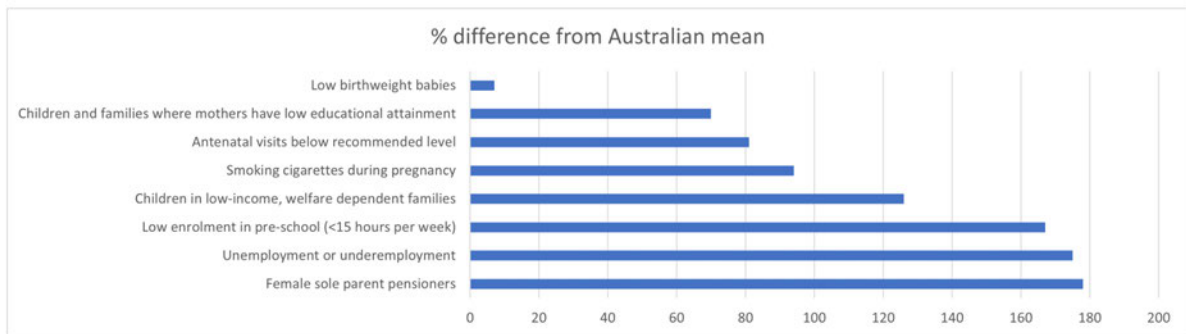
The quality of the society and neighbourhood into which an infant is born and the social capital they inherit sits above and shapes their ECEC experience. Of the range of corrective services for when things go wrong – primarily health and welfare – the most potent are proportionate universal health interventions.

My aspiration is for an ambitious effort at the highest level to address social risk, to provide free, high-quality and accessible ECEC in the critical first thousand days, and to ensure universal access to mother and baby health services that genuinely give priority to the neediest. This will do more to protect children and promote their wellbeing and mental

health than the targeted health and welfare services that we mostly hold responsible for their safety and wellbeing.

As one of Australia's most deprived urban regions, already the subject of concern and commitment from state government, the north of Adelaide would be an ideal demonstration site for a collaboration that goes beyond strengthening individual services to actively address Social Determinants.

**Characteristics of residents living in Playford City Council relative to the rest of Australia:**



Children aged 0-14 in Playford:

- 73% above national average for potentially preventable health conditions (for example, serious infections, obesity, injury) and years of life lost
- more likely to experience social, behavioural and psychological difficulties and be classified as developmentally vulnerable.

**Prof Jon Jureidini** PhD MBBS FRANZCP  
**Research Leader**, Robinson Research Institute | The University of Adelaide



February 2023