

THRIVE BY FIVE SUBMISSION TO THE ROYAL COMMISSION INTO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE (SOUTH AUSTRALIA) THREE-YEAR-OLD PRESCHOOL

28 FEBRUARY 2023



1. INTRODUCTION

Led by the Honourable Julia Gillard, the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care (Royal Commission) is inquiring into:

1. The extent to which South Australian families are supported in the first 1000 days of a child's life, is focused on opportunities to further leverage early childhood education and care to enable equitable and improved outcomes for South Australian children.
2. How universal quality preschool programs for three- and four-year-olds can be delivered in South Australia, including addressing considerations of accessibility, affordability, quality and how to achieve universality for both age cohorts. Consideration of universal three-year-old preschool should be undertaken with a view to achieving this commencing in 2026.
3. How all families can have access to out-of-school hours care (OSHC) at both preschool and primary school ages, including considerations of accessibility in all parts of the state, affordability, and quality in public and private settings.

The Royal Commission is calling for submissions about the development of universal 3-year-old Preschool by 28 February 2023.

Thrive By Five notes that there are many issues associated with the delivery of 3-year-old Preschool. These span evidence on the development and learning benefits of high-quality preschool for children and matters related to the delivery funding and regulation of preschool; including the responsibilities of the Commonwealth, South Australian and local governments.

2. A LONG-TERM VISION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Thrive By Five recommends that the Royal Commission make recommendations within the context of a long-term vision of a 'world-leading' early childhood development 'system' for South Australia. An early childhood development 'system' includes maternity care, child and maternal health services, early childhood education and care (ECEC - childcare and preschool), family services and benefit payments (e.g., paid parental leave). These are foundations that Governments provide to support families raising children.

The Centre for Policy Development, in its seminal 'Starting Better' Report¹, provided more detail of what a world-leading early childhood development system in Australia would include when it defined an 'Early Childhood Guarantee' for all children and families:

- Paid Parental paid parental leave;
- Universal access to maternal and child health care;

¹ Centre for Policy Development. Starting Better. 2021

- three days (up to 30 hours) of free or low-cost high-quality early childhood education and care;
- three days (up to 30 hours) of free or low-cost high-quality preschool per week for the two years before children start 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
- developing better mechanisms to provide seamless support for children from the day they are born, including more effective transitions from early learning to primary school.

Researchers have stated that a vision of an early childhood development system such as that described in the Starting Better Report is best delivered by providing Integrated Early Years Centres (that provide child and maternal health, ECEC (childcare and preschool), family services and playgroups) located in local neighbourhoods, particularly on or near school sites², and that there is a coherent base of evidence to support this approach. School communities offer natural social contexts for the delivery of such services in Australian contexts and there is the opportunity to significantly improve life course opportunities for children via neighbourhood early years initiatives based on school sites³.

Thrive by Five believes this is aligned with existing visions for an early childhood system in South Australia, and build on previous policy analysis and reform.

Fraser Mustard, the Thinker in Residence for South Australia in 2008, recommended continuing the establishment of universal early child development and parenting centres linked to local primary schools⁴. He stated these centres must provide integrated services, with an integrated program that is supported through whole-of-government funding; and supported the inclusion of publicly funded childcare and preschool education within the centre program.

Carla Rinaldi, the South Australian Thinker in Residence for 2012⁵ recommended creating in South Australia an integrated early childhood system of services for children 0 - 6 years where ‘integrated’ means that care and education are inseparable.

Through the South Australian Government’s ‘Children’s Centre program’⁶, South Australia has already commenced building integrated early years centres on or near school sites.

The practical benefits of these centres are many and include:

- High-quality early childhood health, ECEC and other family and children’s services accessible in the local community;
- Provision of Out of School Hours School Hours Care (OSHC) with extended hours at every school;
- sustainable funding through the Commonwealth Government is available through its responsibility to fund ECEC (including OSHC and preschool – currently paid through the Commonwealth Government’s Child Care Subsidy (CCS) which can be supplemented by South Australian Government funding;
- maximising the expertise of early childhood teachers and educators employed by schools across childcare and 3-year-old preschool settings;
- seamless transitions for children from care to school; and

² Life Course Centre. Early Childhood Development and Neighbourhood Hubs: A Review of the Literature. 2020.

³ Life Course Centre. Early Childhood Development and Neighbourhood Hubs: A Review of the Literature. 2020.

⁴ Mustard, F. Investing in the Early Years: Closing the gap between what we know and what we do. 2007.

⁵ Rinaldi, C. Re-imagining Childhood The inspiration of Reggio Emilia education principles in South Australia

⁶ SA Government Website. <https://www.education.sa.gov.au/parents-and-families/child-care-services/childrens-centres>

- local centres provide an opportunity for early years professionals to identify and connect families that need help with community and social services that can help them.

The long-term vision of establishing Integrated Early Years Centres located on or near school sites, that deliver universal and high-quality services provides a foundation for a world-leading early years system for South Australia - bringing to life systems such as the 'Early Childhood Guarantee' described in Starting Better Report⁷. Thrive by Five believes that this is the most effective and efficient way to deliver 3-Year-Old year-old preschool and OSHC.

If the Royal Commission agrees with this vision, then it should recommend support for families in the first 1000 days, 3-year-old preschool and OSHC that are aligned and build on South Australian Government reforms past and present.

Thrive by Five's recommendations in this submission are aligned with achieving this vision.

Recommendation:

That the Royal Commission set a long-term vision of establishing Integrated Early Years centres located on or near school sites that deliver universally available and high-quality services early childhood services (including 3-year-old preschool and OSHC); and aligns all recommendations to achieve this vision.

Note: A key consideration for the Royal Commission may be **defining 'universal quality Preschool'**. Minderoo would recommend that the accepted definition between Australian Governments for 4-year-old Preschool be adopted for 3-year-old-Preschool in South Australia. This definition would be interpreted to state that every child, 24-12 months prior to full-time schooling, has access to a preschool program delivered: by a four-year university-qualified early childhood teacher in accordance with a national early years learning framework; for 15 hours a week, 40 weeks a year; across a diversity of settings; in a form that meets the needs of parents; and at a cost that does not present a barrier to participation.

ECEC AS A BACKBONE SERVICE FOR AN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM.

Economic, social and developmental science evidence supports the provision of universal and high-quality ECEC, including 3-year-old preschool. This is because of its positive impact on children's development and learning (with greater benefits for children from disadvantaged backgrounds⁸), and allows parents to work, which in turn provides more family resources to support child development, and benefits the economy. In summary, a public health approach with low barriers to entry leads to more effective and efficient developmental support.

The Minderoo Foundation strongly supports providing a universal model of Preschool, rather than a targeted approach (only to children in need). Research shows that a universal approach with low barriers to entry lead to earlier more effective and efficient developmental support⁹. Proportionate universal, also known as progressive universal, service systems are recommended to support the early years of health and development. Proportionate universal systems offer some form of services to all members of the population with service responses increasing for those in greater need or facing more barriers to effective parenting.

⁷ Centre for Policy Development. Starting Better. 2021

⁸ A Review of the Effects of Early Childhood education. Government of NSW. 2018

⁹ Five by Five A Supporting Systems Framework for Child Health and Development. University of Adelaide 2014.

Secondly, universal programs build stronger political and public commitment than targeted approaches. This is critically important in ensuring the long-term viability of early years services.

Why should 3-year-old Preschool be universal? In 2021/22, 57% of 2-year-olds and 63% of 4-year-olds attended a registered ECEC service in South Australia. An estimated 95% of children attended 4-Year-old Preschool. Further, the percentage of all 0–5-year-olds attending a registered ECEC service has increased year on year for the last 5 years and is likely to continue to increase as families find that two adults are required to work (full or part-time) to meet family financial commitments¹⁰.

¹⁰This is shown in the table below.

AGE	PERCENTAGE ATTENDING A REGISTERED ECEC SERVICE IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA
0 years old	10.4
1 year old	45.5
2 years old	57.2
3 years old	63.4
4 years old	55.6
5 years old	39.6

What this demonstrates is that ECEC is now attended by most children, and the percentage is increasing each year. It is used more by children and families than other early childhood services.

Given this, there is an opportunity for ECEC can be used as a 'backbone' service that can perform the role of a centrepin service in Integrated Early Years Centres, consistent with the vision described above. The reasons for this are:

- They are now attended by most children, and the percentage attending is increasing.
- They are staffed by trained professionals that interact with families each day.
- They have suitable facilities that can accommodate other visiting professionals.
- They have stable and sustainable funding delivered by the Commonwealth, and South Australian Governments.
- These regulations governing their operation provide the flexibility to deliver long day care, occasional care, OSHC and 3- and 4-year-old preschool.

Effectively, if ECEC (including 3-year-old-Preschool) is delivered as part of Integrated Early Years Centres located on or near school sites, this 'leverages' the capacity of ECEC to host other services, creating 'wrap-around' service approaches, and provides regular contact with families enabling early intervention and better transitions to school.

Recommendation.

Early Childhood Education and Care become a universal backbone service that hosts other children's services including maternal and child health, 3-year-old preschool and OSHC.

As stated above, ECEC services should be progressively located on or near school sites in future years, starting with schools located in low socio-economic, outer regional and remote communities.

¹⁰ Report on Government Services. Early Childhood Education and Care 2022 Table 3A:14

¹¹ Cheaper Childcare. A practical plan to boost female workforce participation. Grattan Institute. 2020

3. TERM OF REFERENCE TWO. HOW UNIVERSAL QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR THREE- AND FOUR-YEAR-OLDS CAN BE DELIVERED IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

As stated above, Thrive by Five believes that the long-term vision for the delivery of 3-year-old Preschool in South Australia should be through ECEC services that are part of Integrated Early Years Centres located on or near school sites. 4-year-old Preschool could also be delivered through these Centres, where it makes sense to do so given existing infrastructure and arrangements. Like arrangements with public schooling, these centres could be designed to provide a place for every child.

Having 3-year-old Preschool delivered in Integrated Early Years Centres on or near school sites makes it accessible (geographically proximate for most families), improves quality, as schools can provide educational and staffing support to improve the program, makes life easier for families with one 'drop off and pick up' for all children, including OSHC located on the same site.

Achieving this long-term vision may take 10-20 years, and there needs to be a detailed policy analysis conducted on options to achieve this goal. Thrive by Five notes that the following policy options could be analysed, but does not have sufficient resources or information to make recommendations regarding preferred options:

- Government building (or identifying if already established) purpose-built Integrated Early Years Centres (including childcare, OSHC, 3-Year-Old-year-old Preschool) on or near primary school sites, and contracting the operation of these centres to third party/s that can meet the child, family, and community goals of the South Australian Government. There are precedents for this across Australia¹².
- Government retrofitting existing built infrastructure at primary school sites to establish Integrated Early Years Centres, and contracting the operation of these centres to third party ECEC providers that can meet the child, family, and community goals of local government; or in smaller communities, enable the school to deliver or host the preschool service. This may include retrofitting any Children's centres that do not have the facilities to offer ECEC.
- Government contracting with third parties, that can meet the child, family, and community goals, to build and/or operate Integrated Early Years Centres (including childcare, OSHC, and 3-Year-Old-year-old-preschool) on or near primary school sites.
- [Separately or as part of options 1 and 2] Allowing schools in areas where ECEC provision is scarce, to register as approved providers of ECEC (under Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority - ACECQA) and offer 3-Year-Old-year-old-preschool, OSHC and Long Day Care (LDC) services.
- A combination of options 1-4 (above).

In investigating these policy options, government deliberations must focus on maximising the public value for each child, family and community for Commonwealth and South Australian Government funding contributions.

Practically, this may mean ECEC service providers that enter contractual arrangements with the South Australian Government to operate ECEC services agree to the following.

- 'Reinvesting funding, or a set percentage of funding, from providing 3-Year-old Preschool in the ECEC services being provided for the community.

¹² Larapinta Early Learning Centre; <https://www.larapintaprimarv.nt.edu.au/children-and-family-centre>
Nightcliff Early Learning Centre - <https://www.nightcliffprimarv.nt.edu.au/early-learning-centre>

- Provide additional services for the community free of charge, host other services to provide wraparound services, (e.g., Child Health nurses) and integrate their services with schools.
- Meet high-quality standards (National Quality Framework (NQF) ratings) and deliver appropriate pay and conditions for staff.

Recommendation:

- The South Australian Government have a long-term vision of universal 3-Year-Old-year-old preschool being delivered in integrated early years centres located on or near school sites.
- ECEC service providers contracted by the South Australian Government to deliver 3-Year-Old Preschool meet set requirements, including:
 - ‘reinvesting funding (or a set percentage of funding) provided in improving the quality of delivery of 3-year-old preschool and/or services for the community;
 - host other children and family services so that ‘wrap-around service approaches can be implemented;
 - meet or exceed National Quality Standards, with a focus on Standard 1 – the Educational Program;
 - provide appropriate pay and conditions for staff, including extended tenure for staff to reduce turnover.

3.1 PRIORITY FOR AREAS OF NEED IN DISADVANTAGED URBAN COMMUNITIES

Data shows that South Australia has higher levels of social and economic disadvantage compared to other Australian states and territories (e.g., Australian Early Development Census¹³). Given the high correlation between socio-economic disadvantage and children’s development, the Royal Commission should recommend that communities with high concentrations of vulnerable children are prioritised in rolling out 3-year-old Preschool.

Socio-economic data shows there are many communities with high numbers of vulnerable children in the Adelaide metropolitan area, particularly the northern suburbs¹⁴. Prioritising the provision of high-quality, affordable, and accessible early childhood development services, including 3-year-old preschool, to these communities is recommended.

Recommendation

The South Australian Government provide Integrated Early Years Centres (including 3-Year-Old year-old preschool and OSHC services) in low-income urban communities, where there is currently a lack of provision of ECEC services and children with high needs.

¹³ Australian Early Development Census – National Report 2021.

¹⁴ ABS Community Profiles

4. GUIDING QUESTIONS

The Royal Commission has provided guiding questions¹⁵ for organisations or individuals wishing to make submissions specifically about 3-year-old Preschool in South Australia.

4.1 PURPOSE AND AIMS

Definition of Universal. (See Page 3 above)

How should 3-year-old preschool differ from ECEC currently provided to 3-year-olds in ECEC settings? 3-year-old preschool should have an educational focus that is age appropriate for 3-year-olds. Programs should feature an intentional 'play-based' curriculum with set development and learning goals.

How many hours per week should 3-year-old Preschool be free to all children?

15 hours.

4.2 WORKFORCE

Across Australia, the ECEC workforce is in crisis, with high turnover, staff shortages and stress being reported by teachers and educators. Large providers have stated that the shortage of qualified educators and teachers is forcing the closure of rooms and in some cases entire ECEC services.

This was demonstrated by the recently released NQF Performance Report¹⁶ which found that the percentage of ECEC services given a workforce waiver from the NQF standard (because they cannot attract suitable staff) has increased markedly compared to previous years. 8.5% of all services hold a staffing waiver, up from 6.7% in 2021.

Nationally, 15% of long day care services hold a staffing waiver (up from 11% in 2021). To make the crisis worse, the early childhood and primary initial teacher training degree completion numbers continue to decline. In South Australia, the proportion of long day care services with a staffing waiver has risen from 10% in 2016 to 18.5% in 2022. This means that almost 1 in 5 long day care centres cannot attract suitably qualified staff, which significantly impacts the quality of the educational program that can be provided to children.

Other states have taken steps to address the workforce crisis in the ECEC sector, and unless South Australia takes similar measures then it risks losing early childhood trained teachers and educators to other states and territories. For example, the Victorian Government¹⁷ is offering:

- Individual incentives of \$9,000 for eligible qualified early childhood teachers working outside the Victorian early childhood sector to take up a teaching role at any service delivering, or planning to deliver, funded Three-Year-Old preschool in 2023;
- Location incentives of between \$9,000 to \$50,000 for qualified early childhood teachers who secure a teaching role at selected services.

Further, NSW Teachers are being offered incentives of \$20,000 to \$30,000, rental subsidies, recruitment, and relocation bonuses¹⁸.

¹⁵ <https://www.royalcommissionecec.sa.gov.au/documents/Call-for-Submissions-preschool.pdf>

¹⁶ ACECQA National Performance Report 2022

¹⁷ <https://www.vic.gov.au/financial-support-study-and-work-early-childhood>

¹⁸ NSW Teacher Benefits and Incentives - <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teach-nsw/find-teaching-jobs/choose-rural/benefits-and-incentives#Additional>

For the South Australian government to meet its objectives of delivering 3-year-old Preschool, then it must address the workforce crisis in the ECEC sector.

Recommendations

The South Australian Government implement a suite of measures to address the workforce crisis in the ECEC sector. This should include:

- Improved wages and conditions for ECEC teachers and educators (within South Australia to attract staff to less desirable locations, and to attract staff from other jurisdictions).
- Benefits and incentives to attract and retain ECEC staff.
- Fee free University (no HECS) and TAFE places for people wishing to train as ECEC teachers and educators.
- Improve the tenure for ECEC teachers and educators who work for Government services, to provide more sustainability for services and staff; and/or require this of ECEC providers that receive South Australian Government funding.
- Negotiation with the Commonwealth Government to establish a national approach to setting minimum pay and conditions for early childhood staff on Federal Awards; create a system of National Teacher Registration; and use its powers to change the existing AiTSL requirements for Early Childhood Trained teachers to include appropriate 0–5-year-old content.
- Funding for ECEC providers to release staff for in-service training programs.

4.3. DELIVERY AND ADMINISTRATION OF 3-YEAR-OLD PRESCHOOL

Thrive by Five notes that there are options for a long-term rollout of a 3-year-old Preschool that should be scoped and investigated.

1. providing 3-Year-Old year-old preschool in selected regions in each of successive years until all South Australian children have access. An example of this approach was the rollout of a 3-Year-Old-year-old preschool in Victoria¹⁹, where the Victorian Government is working with sessional kindergartens and long day care providers to provide 3-year-old preschool region by region from 2020-2029.
2. Providing all (or selected) children with 7.5 hours commencing in 2026 and increasing the number of available hours to a maximum of 15 hours over ensuing years.

Note: The South Australian Government may consider purchasing 3-Year-Old year-old Preschool places for children with special needs in existing facilities ahead of a state-wide rollout. This approach has been implemented successfully in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) as a first step in achieving a rollout across the ACT. The ACT Government are commencing this policy by purchasing places for two days a week for three-year-old children who are most in need of participating ECEC service providers. Participating service providers are required to 'reinvest' funding gained from Government in the Centre-Based Service (CBS)²⁰.

¹⁹Victorian Government Information. <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/professionals/profdev/information-for-parents.pdf>

²⁰ ACT Quality Early Childhood Education for Three-Year-Olds - <https://www.education.act.gov.au/early-childhood/set-up-for-success-an-early-childhood-strategy-for-the-act/quality-early-childhood-education-for-three-year-olds>

4.4 FUNDING SERVICES TO DELIVER 3-YEAR-OLD PRESCHOOL

The South Australian Government will likely need to provide funding to existing ECEC services to deliver 3-year-old-Preschool.

If this occurs, then the Royal Commission should make recommendations that step towards the long-term vision for the delivery 3-Year-Old-year-old preschool described above.

This may require contracting existing ECEC providers. Preference should be given to purchasing 3-Year-Old preschool places from existing ECEC services that are geographically proximate to schools, or that already have existing working relationships with schools. As stated above, ECEC providers contracted to deliver 3-Year-Old year-old preschool should meet the requirements recommended on page 6 above.

In doing this the amount of funding that the service receives must be based on the level of need of children enrolled at the service.

The 'School Readiness Funding Model'²¹ used by the Victorian Government provides an example of a model that could be modified for use in South Australia. This model uses information on parental education levels and income to determine an amount per student for 3- and 4-year-old children participating in preschool. Services are then required to work with Government officials to determine a plan for how funding is expended. A 'menu' of evidence-informed practices is provided that can be incorporated into the plan, thus ensuring improved quality in the delivery of preschool programs. Services are required to spend 75% of the funding received on items from the set menu.

4.5. ACCESSING FUNDING FOR STATEWIDE DELIVERY OF 3-YEAR-OLD PRESCHOOL IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

It is recommended that the South Australian government negotiate with the Commonwealth Government to share the costs of the delivery of a 3-year-old preschool in South Australia.

A key reason for this is a historic inequity in the funding for 0-4-year-old Preschool between different states, and the potential for the Commonwealth Government to offset funding to States and Territories where their contribution to 4-year-old Preschool is lower.

To explain this, in NSW, Victoria and Queensland funding for 4-year-old Preschool is largely provided by the Commonwealth Government through the provision of Child Care Subsidy (CCS), as it is delivered predominately in registered ECEC settings. This is not the same as in other states, where 4-year-old Preschool is delivered as part of the school system and funded by State and Territory Governments (including South Australia).

Australia has achieved near-universal enrolment in Preschool for 4-year-olds, which is funded through a multi-lateral agreement between the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments. This has been a critical foundation in the success of increasing the percentage of children enrolled in 4-year-old preschool from 12 per cent in 2008 to 96 per cent in 2018²².

²¹ School Readiness Funding Victoria - <https://www.vic.gov.au/school-readiness-funding>

Two-thirds of 3-year-olds already attend early education and care of some sort (mainly childcare – funded by the Commonwealth Government through CCS). However, only 21% attend a Preschool program (e.g., a learning program with a trained teacher). In South Australia, this is 16.6% (2016 data).

The inequity in the funding of 4-year-old preschool was explained in the report titled ‘UANP Review: Final Review Report to the COAG Education Council’²³. It found that jurisdictions with a higher prevalence of Centre Based Daycare Preschool enrolments appear to invest less in the YBFS [4-year-old preschool] than states and territories where Preschool is delivered all or partly through the school system, such as South Australia.

The report went on to state that further analysis was required but recommended that governments should consider how to achieve more equitable levels of investment [across jurisdictions]. This is supported by the Report on Government Services 2022 demonstrates the inequity in contributions from State and Territory Governments in their contributions to preschool²⁴.

Thrive by Five²⁵ has calculated that it would cost the Commonwealth Government an additional \$350-\$400 million annually to equalize funding for 4-year-old preschool. Thrive by Five calculates that South Australia would receive an **estimated \$109 million** that it could use for the rollout of 3-Year-Old-year-old Preschool if this approach were adopted.

The South Australian Government could negotiate with the Commonwealth Government to provide equitable funding for 3-year-old and 4-year-old Preschool (combined) in South Australia, no matter what setting preschool is delivered through (long day-care centres, standalone preschools, or primary schools). In return, the South Australian Government could use the additional funding provided by the Commonwealth Government to support the roll-out of 3-year-old Preschool.

Recommendation

- **That the South Australian Government negotiate with the Commonwealth Government to jointly fund the rollout of 3-Year-Old year-old Preschool.**

²³ Universal Access National Partnership Review: Final Review Report COAG Education Council (Nous) 2019

²⁴ Report on Government Services 2022, Vol. B: Childcare, education, and training.

²⁵ 2021-22 Pre-Budget Submission. Minderoo Foundation

5. TERM OF REFERENCE THREE. HOW ALL FAMILIES CAN HAVE ACCESS TO OSHC AT BOTH PRESCHOOL AND PRIMARY SCHOOL AGES, INCLUDING CONSIDERATIONS OF ACCESSIBILITY IN ALL PARTS OF THE STATE, AFFORDABILITY, AND QUALITY IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SETTINGS.

Note: It is unclear when the Royal Commission is seeking submissions regarding Out of School Hours Care. Initial commentary and recommendations related to OSHC have been included in this submission. Further information will be provided in a subsequent submission.

A lack of access to OSHC can be a major stumbling block to parents pursuing or maintaining their employment opportunities. This can harm the financial viability of households, child development which is connected to a family's economic fortunes, and the general economic activity of South Australia.

Many parents are familiar with the stress of balancing work and family. It begins with finding a childcare place for infants and toddlers, which can lead to a difficult 'double drop-off' between the childcare centre and school, and then getting to work on time. In the afternoon, it all starts again when school finishes hours before many of us finish work. School holidays bring extra headaches as parents ponder what to do with their kids during working hours.

Making OSHC available for every family should be a priority for all governments. Given, the shared funding and regulatory arrangements between the Commonwealth and South Australian Governments for the delivery of OSHC, the primary responsibility of the Commonwealth Government to fund OSHC, means that delivering OSHC in SA requires a high level of cooperation between The Commonwealth and South Australian Government.

As stated above, Thrive by Five believes that the long-term vision for the delivery of OSHC in South Australia should be through registered ECEC centres that are part of Integrated Early Years Centres located on or near primary school sites. These centres would also provide long day care, 3-year-old, and possibly 4-year-old preschool, and other child and family services. These centres should provide enough places for the expected demand for each school's local catchment area.

Providing OSHC through registered ECEC centres that are part of integrated early childhood centres located on or near primary school sites has many advantages.

- high-quality OSHC is accessible in the local community;
- provision of OSHC on school sites extends the hours at every school, making 'pick-ups' and 'drop-offs' easier for families.
- sustainable funding through the Commonwealth Government is available through its responsibility to fund ECEC (including OSHC) which can be supplemented by South Australian Government funding if required.
- school staff can support the quality of the OSHC programs.
- seamless transitions for children from care to school;
- an opportunity for early years professionals to identify and connect families that need help with services that can help them; and
- schools have existing infrastructure that can in many instances, be easily modified for OSHC.

Recommendation:

The South Australian Government have a long-term policy goal of Out of School Hours Care being delivered in integrated early years centres located on or near school sites.

ECEC service providers contracted by the South Australian Government to deliver Out of School Hours Care be required to:

- 'reinvest' funding provided (or a set percentage of funding) in improving the quality of delivery of OSHC and/or services for the community;
- Work with other children's and family services;
- meet or exceed National Quality Standards;
- provide appropriate pay and conditions for staff.

ABOUT MINDEROO FOUNDATION

Established by Andrew and Nicola Forrest in 2001, Minderoo Foundation is one of Australasia's largest philanthropies, with AUD\$ 2.6 billion funds invested. in philanthropic causes. Minderoo Foundation supports a range of initiatives, including eliminating childhood cancer, improving early childhood education, ending modern slavery, and driving accountability and responsibility for global overfishing, plastic pollution, improving gender equity, global warming, and the tech ecosystem. Through a collaborative, evidence-based approach we strive to solve major challenges through our key initiatives.

ABOUT THRIVE BY FIVE

Thrive by Five is an initiative of the Minderoo Foundation that is campaigning to transform our current early learning and childcare system into a comprehensive, high-quality, universally accessible, and affordable early learning system. It is led by Jay Weatherill, AO, formerly Premier of South Australia.

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE ROYAL COMMISSION

Thank you for the opportunity to submit.

Thrive by Five would welcome the opportunity for further engagement.

Please contact Jay Weatherill, Director of Thrive By Five, at [REDACTED] if you have any queries.