

# Submission to the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care – 3-year-old Preschool

---

February 2023

## Introduction

As South Australia's Commissioner for Children and Young People, my mandate under the *Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016* is to promote and advocate for the rights and interests of all children and young people in the State. This begins with the State's youngest children, where the early years are a pivotal time for children's development and outcomes now and in the future. All young children in South Australia have a right to attend preschool and access other early years services.

It is also my role to ensure that South Australia meets its obligations in relation to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC recognises all children's rights from birth across a broad range of areas including in relation to non-discrimination, families, and play. Particularly relevant to the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care is children's right to education (Article 28). While early childhood is not explicitly named in relation to education in the UNCRC, General Comment No. 7 'Implementing child rights in early childhood' states that '[t]he Committee interprets the right to education during early childhood as beginning at birth and closely linked to young children's right to maximum development (art. 6.2)'.<sup>1</sup> In Australia, the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) explicitly states that '[e]arly childhood educators guided by the Framework will reinforce in their daily practice the principles laid out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child'.<sup>2</sup>

As Commissioner for Children and Young People in South Australia, I have engaged with children in the early years across the State in a broad range of settings, including in my Listening Tour and the Early Learning Unplugged Challenge Activities as part of my Commissioner's Digital Challenge. I have also spoken with children in the early years in preschools/kindergartens, out-of-school-hours care (OSHC), and Children's Centres. Building on my extensive engagement with 8–12 year olds across the State with my Student Voice Postcards initiative, I am currently using this method of engagement with children in the early years in early childhood education and care settings and OSHC.

I welcome the opportunity to engage with the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care. In this submission relating to 3-year-old preschool I argue for a more holistic consideration of children in the early years. As the Terms of Reference for the Royal Commission makes clear, the early years relate not only to formal education, but to families and communities, with the desire to benefit 'the social fabric of South Australia'.

There is a high risk that 4-year-old preschool will simply be opened up to include 3-year-old children, without ensuring that preschool is the best place for these children. This approach is something which I would strongly reject and view as an inefficient and expensive exercise which would not necessarily be of benefit to children, families, and the state of South Australia.

If a key purpose of 3-year-old preschool is to address disadvantage and benefit all children, then preschool needs to be viewed in the broader context of children's lives. The Royal Commission is an opportunity to do something bigger for the benefit of children, families, and the State with a long-term strategy focused on the early years. It is a chance to rethink how the early years are approached in South Australia, with a focus on addressing inequity and improving outcomes for all children. Considering that those

children who are currently missing out on preschool are those who are likely to need it most,<sup>3</sup> introducing 3-year-old preschool without addressing more systemic issues will likely not benefit these children. The system needs to be easy for families to navigate and accessible and welcoming for all.

In light of the above, I make the following recommendations:

- 1. Ensure 3-year-old preschool is fit for purpose, age and stage appropriate and differentiated simply from existing 4-year-old preschool.**
- 2. Establish an integrated early years system, which includes but is not limited to early childhood education and care.**
- 3. Engage earlier with families across an early years system.**
- 4. Provide both universal and targeted services to address barriers to participation across the early years.**
  - a. Utilise a public health approach to prevent and respond to downstream impacts of lost opportunities for positive child development outcomes.**
  - b. Focus on place-based services with general principles but capacity to build local solutions.**
  - c. Develop universal and targeted preschool programs to ensure opportunities for all children to participate and to break down barriers that prevent participation.**

If you would like to discuss anything further, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Yours sincerely



**Helen Connolly**

Commissioner for Children and Young People  
Adelaide, South Australia

## **1. Ensure 3-year-old preschool is fit for purpose, age and stage appropriate and differentiated simply from existing 4-year-old preschool.**

The push for 3-year-old preschool in South Australia has gained significant momentum, with the Terms of Reference for the Royal Commission already asking for this to commence by 2026. Much more consideration of the purpose and methods of introducing universal 3-year-old preschool is needed, as there is a high risk that it will simply be 4-year-old preschool opened up to 3 year olds. If this is the case, it is something which I would strongly reject. This approach may not have a positive benefit to children:

Without the focus on the specific developmental stage and circumstances of 3 year olds, there is a risk that 3 year olds will be offered either a learning experience ‘pushed down’ from the 4-year-old curriculum or a ‘sped up’ learning experience – neither of which is likely to lead to the desired learning and development outcomes.<sup>4</sup>

Such an approach is not making the most of the opportunity to do something different, either in the preschool space or in a more integrated early years system, as outlined in further detail below. Furthermore, the rapid review commissioned for the Royal Commission indicates that Australian studies examining early childhood education for 3 year olds has mixed results.<sup>5</sup>

Universal 3-year-old preschool is a very expensive way of attempting to improve outcomes for children and may not actually be achieved with this approach. Given that preschool is predominantly state funded, a universal roll out comes with significant financial cost to South Australia. It is therefore appropriate to consider how to best leverage federal funding through the existing childcare system to meet the objective of increasing access of 3 year olds to quality early childhood education and care. An integrated early years system must meet the dual objectives of accessibility and inclusiveness and be delivered in the most cost effective, efficient, and equitable manner for the whole service system. Introducing universal 3-year-old preschool has the potential to take funding and resources away from these existing services.

## **2. Establish an integrated early years system, which includes but is not limited to early childhood education and care.**

The Royal Commission is an opportunity to think about the outcomes we want for all children across the early years in South Australia, now and in the future. Thinking about children holistically means considering all their rights in relation to a broad service system for the early years, which includes but is not limited to early childhood education and care.

While the economic benefits of investment in the early years, including in relation to education, has been made for many decades, this should not be the key driver in shaping how we think about children. Children’s right to the best start in life is non-negotiable and we have an obligation to have a comprehensive early years system which is accessible and equitable for all children in the State.

It has been well established that the early years are critical for children's development and wellbeing. The first 1000 days of life (from conception to age 2) is increasingly being recognised as crucial,<sup>6</sup> as mentioned in the Terms of Reference for the Royal Commission. This means that 3 year olds may be an important focus group but earlier services are required for the State's youngest children.

The Australian Education Development Census (AEDC) is an important initiative and identifies aspects of inequity. However, it has become a dominant way of thinking about early childhood, with children viewed as in 'deficit'.<sup>7</sup> I ask how might the system be different if we thought about the AEDC in terms of children's rights? What would it look like if the AEDC domains of *physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills (school-based), and communication skills and general knowledge* were things children had a right to rather than domains they are assessed on in terms of being developmentally 'on track', 'at risk', or 'vulnerable'?<sup>8</sup>

We need to think about the opportunities having an Office for the Early Years gives our State and the possible functions it could have.

Currently early years services work more as a series of components with nothing that comprehensively links them together. The current South Australian 'system' is difficult to navigate and, as a recent study indicates, 'often misses those who need it most'.<sup>9</sup> South Australia's new Office for the Early Years has the opportunity to think about children in the early years in a holistic way.

The South Australian Early Learning Strategy 2021 to 2031 states that the early years 'system' includes 'child health, parent support, education, child care, community services and child protection'.<sup>10</sup> The Strategy highlights the importance of a holistic approach to children, rather than thinking about early childhood and care in isolation. However, at its core the Strategy is still focused on education. This thinking needs to be extended further for a comprehensive integrated early years system.

The work of Professor Sharon Goldfeld and colleagues highlights the importance of integrated or 'stacked' services in early childhood, as outlined in the hearings for the Royal Commission. The *Restacking the Odds* project highlights the fundamental strategies needed in the early years in relation to antenatal care, sustained nurse home visiting, early childhood education and care, parenting programs, and early years of school.<sup>11</sup> Integrated service delivery is already occurring in South Australia in places such as Children and Family Centres and Communities for Children, but this is difficult to navigate and not available to all children and families who need them. South Australia has a history of integrated services in the early years, as detailed by Professor Sandie Wong in her submission to the Royal Commission. It is this approach that we need to build on to give children the best start to life.

Families need integrated support across the early years to provide the best environment for children's development and wellbeing. It is particularly important for families to be supported as early as possible, before the need for engagement with the child protection system, as outlined in my submission to the Review of the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*.<sup>12</sup> This requires investment in a wide range of services and resources for families before a crisis occurs. Networks of support are needed in the community without



restrictive eligibility criteria, which take into account a range of structural issues that increase stress for families, including those relating to poverty and health inequities.

One important aspect of an early years system in South Australia is Children and Family Health Services (CaFHS), responsible for important services across a broad range of areas including home visits soon after birth.<sup>13</sup> This early engagement with the system enables children to be sighted and offers the potential for ongoing parent engagement with services for their children. Other Australian studies have highlighted how nurse home visiting has ongoing positive impacts for children and their families.<sup>14</sup> However, CaFHS needs adequate funding and resourcing to be able to provide sustained support to children and their families. As it is, CaFHS now only follows up with families viewed as needing extra support after the first visit, meaning this service is not more widely available,<sup>15</sup> and can work to stigmatise families receiving this support. CaFHS could work better as an opt out system, rather than an opt in system based on strict external criteria placed on families. To ensure adequate funding and resources for expanded services, CaFHS could potentially be integrated into a broader early years approach to family support.

### **3. Engage earlier with families across an early years system.**

All families in South Australia need to have access to a welcoming, trustworthy, and equitable early years system that is responsive to their needs. Early and genuine engagement throughout the early years provides an opportunity for children and their families to be involved with early years services in positive ways from an early age.

The 0–5-year-old population in South Australia is expected to increase by 7,400 children over the next decade (from 117,900 in 2021/22 to 125,300 in 2030/31).<sup>16</sup> At the same time, there are ever increasing notifications to child protection making this an opportunity to do things differently to provide the best early years services for the benefit of children, their families, and the State. This needs adequate funding and a clear early years strategy to ensure the best use of money and resources.

I am particularly aware of the high number of notifications to child protection made in relation to young children and the need for positive engagement which supports families across an early years system. Statistics from South Australia show that 22% of children born in 2013–14 were notified by age 5 and 33% of children born 2007–08 were notified by age 10, as outlined by Dr Rhiannon Pilkington in the hearing for the Royal Commission. One in ten children were notified before age 1, with about half of these occurring in the antenatal period. Dr Pilkington's submission highlighted that these children and families have complex services needs and these notifications link to 'vulnerability' on the AEDC.

Despite the early notifications, South Australian child protection services continue to spend approximately 80% of expenditure on out-of-home care and other supported placement services. Little money is spent on much needed family support services and preventative approaches in the early years.<sup>17</sup> An integrated systems approach is required to provide services to families with multiple and complex issues and needs.<sup>18</sup> It is particularly important to recognise that there may be intergenerational disengagement and distrust of services for children and families, as well as experience with the child

protection system over multiple generations.<sup>19</sup> Parents may be fearful of intervention from child protection and therefore remain deliberately disengaged from early years services.<sup>20</sup>

School readiness is often a focus of early years services, particularly preschool. However, it is not just children who need to be ready for school. Families also need to be engaged early and supported to be on the right track. To do this successfully preschool and other services need to be developed to engage all children and their families, but particularly families who are less engaged, and where children may be missing out on their right to preschool education. Children also need to be ready for preschool, and this is not necessarily appropriate for all 3 year olds.

One promising example of early engagement with families and children in South Australia is the Children in the North initiative. In response to a provocation from service providers in Northern Adelaide “What would it take to reset the future for babies born in 2023?” this project has emerged as an alliance of stakeholders intentionally focused on ensuring all preschool children and their families living in Northern Adelaide get the support and intervention they need at the time they need it so that they can reach their full potential and flourish. The project will ‘reset’ the trajectory of children in Northern Adelaide, setting them up for success in the future through collaborating on the activities and deliverables each agency has responsibility for in a way that supports and is coordinated with the actions of others.

As the fastest-growing metropolitan population in South Australia, 25% of the Northern Adelaide population will be under 17 years old by 2030. The project is iterative by design with a goal to make a difference in real time by engaging with families of children born in 2023 and working with them in new ways to design the system they think is most helpful, rather than waiting until all details have been worked out.

Bringing together key State government stakeholders the project will design a system more responsive to children and families to improve the overall development and educational outcomes of children in the north. Children in the North is not seeking to add further complexity to the work of agencies or service providers but will work with current providers to ultimately create a new way of working that is sustainable and responsive, and codesigns services with families to deliver what they want to maximise their children’s health and learning outcomes. Progress depends on developing trust among government agencies, non-profits, corporations, and community members and shared responsibility for creation of governance and operational infrastructure to underpin the new and innovative systems approach. Senior officers of key government departments have met many times over the past 12 months. Collectively they understand that the current fragmented system is not responsive to the needs of children or families, including in relation to early intervention support, and the help families need is hidden behind complex care pathways and systems. Consequently, many families and providers are unable to navigate the myriad of service pathways and meet complex service eligibility or endure long wait times for services.

This project, Chaired by me in my capacity as Commissioner for Children and Young People and championed by the Head of the Office for the Early Years and the Northern Adelaide Local Health Network, is built on a foundation of community capacity-building to ensure that our work acknowledges the connection between the wellbeing of families and the communities in which they live and focus on the ability of families to draw support from their own less formal networks within the community.

Another example of the importance of early engagement is in the work of Professor Andrew Whitehouse at Telethon Kids Institute with very young children showing signs of autism. Autism makes up the largest disability category on the NDIS. However, Professor Whitehouse's research showed that a pre-emptive intervention with babies who showed signs of behaviours relating to autism at 9-14 months reduced these behaviours across early childhood and reduced the chances of being diagnosed with autism at 3 years old.<sup>21</sup> This kind of early years work is something which the State should be investing in, improving the current and future lives of children in South Australia.

#### **4. Provide both universal and targeted services to address barriers to participation across the early years.**

##### **a. Utilise a public health approach to prevent and respond to downstream impacts of lost opportunities for positive child development outcomes.**

A public health approach to services includes both universal and targeted services and would be most effective for ensuring children's rights to early childhood education and other services, as advocated for in the Nyland report on the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission. Primary/universal services are provided to whole communities, secondary/targeted services for vulnerable families with risk indicators for child maltreatment, and tertiary services where children experience maltreatment.<sup>22</sup>

A public health approach enables children to have the best start in life with universal approaches but also provides the opportunity to deliver more targeted services to those who may need it. In relation to the AEDC, the Child Development Council recommends that '[k]ey to reducing vulnerability in the early years is a strong universal platform of supports and services available to all children, with a targeted strategy on top of this base.'<sup>23</sup> This enables all children to receive suitable services, reducing vulnerability and improving child development outcomes.

##### **b. Focus on place-based services with general principles but capacity to build local solutions.**

Building upon the public health approach, there is a need for general principles across the early years system, with place-based approaches to best respond to the needs of children and families at a local level. A place-based approach should involve an ongoing formal process of co-design and consultation with local families.

AEDC case studies highlight how location-based data can be used to improve services in preschools and other early childhood services, tailoring approaches to the local community to increase engagement and participation.<sup>24</sup> This is a useful and important way to use AEDC data which goes beyond viewing children as in deficit to thinking more about the approaches that would best work in local communities. A local community approach could involve training for leaders, including preschool directors, to further increase the strategies they can use to identify possibilities for integrated services and referrals. This could include how to approach healthcare and other professionals to come



into their service and how to link with local communities and services such as free libraries. A report by The Smith Family also details several case studies where local approaches are working well in early childhood services.<sup>25</sup>

Family by Family (<https://familybyfamily.org.au/>) is one example of a model in South Australia which is co-designed with families and based locally to ensure the best outcomes for children and their families. This capacity building model could be funded to work with vulnerable families to support them to engage with early years services and build the capacity of the community.

Also in South Australia, Words Grow Minds (<https://wordsgrowminds.com.au/>) is a good example of an initiative that is universal, but which has also been specifically piloted in local communities, starting with Mount Gambier, then Whyalla. This initiative encourages parents to talk with, play with, read to, and sing with their baby. The initiative includes playgroup sessions at local libraries which are attended by other relevant agencies and local networks, enabling families to have easy access to a range of services.

**c. Develop universal and targeted preschool programs to ensure opportunities for all children to participate and to break down barriers that prevent participation.**

There are many possible barriers and facilitators to preschool participation, and there are likely to be multiple complex factors for why children are not enrolled or have low attendance, including in relation to institutionalised and systemic barriers. Navigating early childhood services, including in relation to preschool, needs to be made both simpler and more inclusive, ensuring children's rights to participation in these services for the best outcomes now and in the future. This is especially important for children who may be considered 'vulnerable'.

Preschool needs to be easily accessible, in local communities, and play based. Both universal and targeted preschool are likely to be the best approach to ensuring the rights of all children to have access to preschool programs which meets the needs of children and their families. Preschool needs to be made relevant to break down barriers for Aboriginal families, culturally and linguistically diverse families, children living with disability, and others who do not fit with universal approaches, rather than viewing these children and families as in deficit.

While 3-year-old preschool is the focus of this call for submissions, this disguises the fact that many 3 year olds are already attending preschool. According to the Productivity Commission, nearly two thirds (63.7%, 12,259 children) of 3 year olds in South Australia are enrolled in preschool. Many, but not all, 4 year olds are enrolled (84.1%, 16,735 children), and there are also a small number of 5 year olds (16.1%, 3,445 children), and 6 year olds (0.6%, 129 children).<sup>26</sup> In South Australia, as in the rest of Australia, preschool is not compulsory, leaving it as a parent/caregiver 'choice' whether to enrol their child in a preschool program. Currently, children in South Australia are *eligible* for 15 hours a week of preschool in *the year before starting school*, which differs depending on what time of year they were born.<sup>27</sup> Thus 3-year-old preschool is actually preschool in the penultimate year before starting school. Currently, Aboriginal children and children in care are also eligible

for 12 hours of preschool a week after they turn 3 years old. In addition, children living with disability may be able to start preschool earlier.

However, some 3–5-year-old children are under-represented in preschool enrolments compared to their proportion in the community. For example, children from non-English speaking backgrounds make up 17.3% of the community but only 14.1% of preschool enrolments. Similarly, children from regional areas and children from remote and very remote areas have lower preschool enrolments compared to their proportion in the community. Children living with disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have higher preschool enrolments compared to their proportion in the community, as might be expected with access to 3-year-old preschool encouraged amongst these children.<sup>28</sup>

Disaggregated preschool attendance data by region is needed to provide a more complete picture of preschool attendance in South Australia, but is not readily available. This data could be used to inform co-design and consultation with local families, particularly in areas where attendance is low. Data from the 2021 Census indicates that children in the North of Adelaide have a lower preschool attendance as a proportion of the local population than those in the rest of metropolitan Adelaide, and attendance levels are even lower in regional and remote areas.<sup>29</sup>

Professor Sharon Goldfeld's submission to the Royal Commission outlines facilitators and barriers to preschool identified by parents and providers at four different levels: individual, interpersonal, program and service, and policy and environment.<sup>30</sup> Both parents and providers most often identified *program and service level* facilitators: 'Families feeling like educators understand their child', 'Good communication about what is involved in the center's services', 'Having information about the likely benefits of one's child attending the service', and 'Knowing the educators/staff are professionally trained'. The Smith Family also explored parent and provider perceptions of barriers and facilitators to preschool participation in NSW and Victoria, identifying similar areas that needed attention like parents understanding the benefits of preschool, finding the right preschool, having a simple enrolment experience, feeling welcomed and valued, feeling respected and culturally safe, and being offered support.<sup>31</sup> These highlight the need for welcoming and inclusive preschools which are part of an early years system with services which consider the needs of all children and their families.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. *General Comment No. 7: Implementing Child Rights in Early Childhood*. (1 November 2005). <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/570528>.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Education and Training. *Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*. (2009). <https://www.education.gov.au/download/775/belonging-being-becoming-early-years-learning-framework-australia/18161/document/pdf/en>, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Fox, Stacey, and Myra Geddes. *Preschool – Two Years Are Better Than One: Developing a Universal Preschool Program for Australian 3 Year Olds – Evidence, Policy and Implementation*. (Melbourne: Mitchell Institute, 2016). <https://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/two-years-are-better-than-one-mitchell-institute.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Fox and Geddes, *Preschool – Two Years Are Better Than One*, 77.

<sup>5</sup> Howells, S., B. Lam, Marrone R., and Brinkman Sally A. *Rapid Review of the Literature and Results of an Academic Pulse Survey to Determine the Evidence Behind Pre-School for 3-Year-Old Children*. Commissioned Report for the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care. (South Australia: University of South Australia, 2022).

<https://www.royalcommissionecsa.gov.au/documents/University-of-South-Australia-Rapid-Literature-Review-and-Academic-Pulse-Survey.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Darling, Jonathan C., Panagiotis D. Bamidis, Janice Burberry, and Mary C. J. Rudolf. "The First Thousand Days: Early, Integrated and Evidence-Based Approaches to Improving Child Health: Coming to a Population Near You?". *Archives of Disease in Childhood* 105 (2020): 837–41.

<https://doi.org/10.1136/archdischild-2019-316929>; Moore, Tim G., Noushin Arefadib, Alana Deery, and Sue West. *The First Thousand Days: An Evidence Paper*. (Parkville, Victoria: Centre for Community Child Health, The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne, 2017).

<https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ccchdev/CCCH-The-First-Thousand-Days-An-Evidence-Paper-September-2017.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Iorio, Jeanne Marie, and Nicola Yelland. *Defying Deficit: Children as Capable Citizens of the Now*. (Melbourne: Melbourne Graduate School of Education, The University of Melbourne, 2021).

[https://education.unimelb.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/3814496/MGSE-Industry-Report-4-Defying-Deficit\\_WEB.pdf](https://education.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/3814496/MGSE-Industry-Report-4-Defying-Deficit_WEB.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Department of Education, Skills and Employment. *Australian Early Development Census National Report 2021: Early Childhood Development in Australia*. (Canberra: DESE, 2022).

<https://www.aedc.gov.au/Websilk/Handlers/ResourceDocument.ashx?id=75ac2964-db9a-6d2b-9fad-ff0000a141dd>.

<sup>9</sup> Middleton, Georgia, Sarah C. Hunter, Brittany J. Johnson, and Rebecca K. Golley. *Navigating the Early Years System in South Australia: Exploring the Caregiver Journey from Multiple Perspectives*. (Adelaide: Flinders University, 2022).

[https://researchnow-admin.flinders.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/59418996/WBSACaringFutures\\_Report\\_Nov22\\_3\\_.pdf](https://researchnow-admin.flinders.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/59418996/WBSACaringFutures_Report_Nov22_3_.pdf).

7.

<sup>10</sup> Department for Education. *Early Learning Strategy 2021 to 2031: All Young Children Thriving and Learning*. (South Australia, 2021). <https://www.education.sa.gov.au/docs/early-years/early-learning-strategy-2021-to-2031-all-young-children-thriving-and-learning.pdf>, 10.

<sup>11</sup> Molloy, Carly, Phoebe Quinn, Chris Harrop, Nicholas Perini, and Sharon Goldfeld. *Restacking the Odds – Communication Summary: early Childhood Education and Care: An Evidence Based Review of Indicators to Assess Quality, Quantity, and Participation*. (Melbourne: Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Social Ventures Australia, and Bain & Company, 2019).

[https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ccchdev/Restacking-the-Odds\\_ECEC\\_communication-summary.pdf](https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ccchdev/Restacking-the-Odds_ECEC_communication-summary.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> Commissioner for Children and Young People. Submission to the Review of the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017. (2022). <https://www.ccyp.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/2022-11-18-CCYP-SA-Submission-to-the-CYPS-Act-Review.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Child and Family Health Services. 2023. <https://www.cafhs.sa.gov.au/services/universal-care>.

- <sup>14</sup> Goldfeld, Sharon, Hannah Bryson, Fiona Mensah, Anna Price, Lisa Gold, Francesca Orsini, Bridget Kenny, *et al.* "Nurse Home Visiting to Improve Child and Maternal Outcomes: 5-Year Follow-up of an Australian Randomised Controlled Trial." *PLOS ONE* 17, no. 11 (2022): e0277773. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0277773>.
- <sup>15</sup> Child Development Council. "Policy Brief 1: South Australia's Surprising Downward Trend in AEDC Results." *Evidence Matters: Every Young South Australian Counts!*, no. 1. (2020). <https://childrensa.sa.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Policy-Brief-1-AEDC-FINAL-2020-08-25-1.pdf>.
- <sup>16</sup> Centre for Population. "2022 Population Statement: State and Territory Population Projections by Age and Sex, 2021-22 to 2032-33." (2023). [https://population.gov.au/sites/population.gov.au/files/2023-01/population\\_statement\\_data\\_download\\_age\\_and\\_sex\\_state\\_and\\_territory.xlsx](https://population.gov.au/sites/population.gov.au/files/2023-01/population_statement_data_download_age_and_sex_state_and_territory.xlsx).
- <sup>17</sup> Productivity Commission. "Report on Government Services 2023: Part F, Section 16: Child Protection Services." (2023). <https://www.pc.gov.au/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2023/community-services/child-protection/rogs-2023-partf-section16-child-protection-data-tables.xlsx>, Table 16A.28.
- <sup>18</sup> Early Intervention Research Directorate. *Summary Report of Research Findings*. (South Australia: Department of Human Services, 2019). [https://dhs.sa.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/78871/Research-Report-Summary-of-Research-Findings-March-2019.pdf](https://dhs.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/78871/Research-Report-Summary-of-Research-Findings-March-2019.pdf).
- <sup>19</sup> Armfield, Jason M., Emmanuel S. Gnanamanickam, David W. Johnston, David B. Preen, and Derek S. Brow. "Intergenerational Transmission of Child Maltreatment in South Australia, 1986–2017: A Retrospective Cohort Study." *Lancet Public Health* 6 (2021): e450–e461. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667\(21\)00024-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667(21)00024-4).
- <sup>20</sup> Hall, Teresa, Rhys Price-Robertson, and Ruby Awram. "Engaging with Parents When There Are Child Protection Concerns: Key Considerations." (Emerging Minds, 2020). <https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/engaging-with-parents-when-there-are-child-protection-concerns-key-considerations/?audience=practitioner>.
- <sup>21</sup> Whitehouse, Andrew J. O., Kandice J. Varcin, Sarah Pillar, Wesley Billingham, Gail A. Alvares, Josephine Barbaro, Catherine A. Bent, *et al.* "Effect of Preemptive Intervention on Developmental Outcomes among Infants Showing Early Signs of Autism: A Randomized Clinical Trial of Outcomes to Diagnosis." *JAMA Pediatrics* 175, no. 11 (2021): e213298. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2021.3298>; Margo, Jill. "How to Reduce Autism Prevalence and Save the NDIS." *Australian Financial Review*. (27 April 2022). <https://www.afr.com/policy/health-and-education/how-to-reduce-autism-prevalence-and-save-the-ndis-20220426-p5agcv>.
- <sup>22</sup> Nyland, Margaret. *The Life They Deserve: Child Protection Systems Royal Commission Report: Volume 1: Summary and Report*. (Government of South Australia, 2016). <https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/documents/report/child-protection-systems-royal-commission-report.pdf>.
- <sup>23</sup> Child Development Council, "Policy Brief 1: South Australia's Surprising Downward Trend in AEDC Results." *Evidence Matters: Every young South Australian Counts!*, 3.
- <sup>24</sup> AEDC User Guide: Early Childhood Sector. (2015). [https://www.aedc.gov.au/resources/detail/aedc\\_userguide-early-childhood-sector](https://www.aedc.gov.au/resources/detail/aedc_userguide-early-childhood-sector).
- <sup>25</sup> The Smith Family. *Small Steps, Big Futures: Community Insights into Preschool Participation*. (Sydney: The Smith Family, 2021). <https://www.thesmithfamily.com.au/-/media/files/research/reports/small-steps-big-future-report.pdf>.
- <sup>26</sup> Productivity Commission. "Report on Government Services 2022: Part B, Section 3: 3 Early Childhood Education and Care." (2022). <https://www.pc.gov.au/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2022/child-care-education-and-training/early-childhood-education-and-care/rogs-202206-partb-section3-ecdc-data-tables.xlsx>, Table 3A.18.
- <sup>27</sup> Department for Education. *School and Preschool Enrolment Policy*. (2023). <https://www.education.sa.gov.au/sites/default/files/school-preschool-enrolment-policy.pdf>.

---

<sup>28</sup> Productivity Commission, "Report on Government Services 2022: Part B, Section 3: 3 Early Childhood Education and Care.", Table 3A.12.

<sup>29</sup> Data compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics. "TYPP Type of Educational Institution Attending and AGEP Age by SA4 (UR)" and "AGEP Age by SA4 (UR)". Census of Population and Housing, 2021, TableBuilder (2021). <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/tablebuilder>

<sup>30</sup> Beatson, Ruth, Carly Molloy, Zoe Fehlberg, Nicholas Perini, Christopher Harrop, and Sharon Goldfeld. "Early Childhood Education Participation: A Mixed-Methods Study of Parent and Provider Perceived Barriers and Facilitators." *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 31 (2022): 2929-46. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-022-02274-5>; Molloy, Carly, Sharon Goldfeld, Christopher Harrop, and Nicholas Perini. *Early Childhood Education: A Study of the Barriers, Facilitators, & Strategies to Improve Participation*. (Melbourne: Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Social Ventures Australia, and Bain & Company, 2022). [https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ccch/images/RSTO-CommBrief-ECEC-Barriers-Faciliators-Strategies-Jan2022\(2\).pdf](https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ccch/images/RSTO-CommBrief-ECEC-Barriers-Faciliators-Strategies-Jan2022(2).pdf).

<sup>31</sup> The Smith Family, *Small Steps, Big Futures*.