



**THRIVE  
BY FIVE**

# WHAT QUEENSLAND CHILDREN NEED TO THRIVE BY FIVE

An alliance of more than 20 organisations from across the child development and well-being, education, university, union, early learning and childcare sectors has come together to make clear the actions Queensland needs to take to give every child the best possible start in life.



When families do well, children do well. The importance of the early years on brain, social and emotional development and education and employment outcomes has been confirmed by evidence and research.

Children and families need a range of support in their child's earliest years, and all children deserve access to quality, inclusive and appropriate early years services, experiences and environments. No family should miss out on the support they need to enable their children to thrive.

An alliance representing the breadth of early childhood development is calling on the Government to deliver an Early Years Plan to ensure all children in Queensland have the opportunity to thrive.

The Queensland Early Years Plan would address long-term systemic issues as well as short-term measures, and would ensure:

- 1 Universal access to kindergarten for all children aged three and four;**
- 2 A holistic early childhood system that supports child developmental outcomes from birth to school;**
- 3 A workforce strategy to attract and retain the best teachers, educators and experts in Queensland;**
- 4 Nationally consistent implementation of the National Quality Framework to ensure high quality services;**
- 5 Local solutions that are connected to communities; and**
- 6 Strong, sector-supported advocacy at National Cabinet.**

This Queensland Early Years Plan should include a road map that outlines the specific actions to be delivered by government and sector partners, advocacy for outcomes linked to national reforms, and structures within Government to ensure accountability and coordinated cross-portfolio delivery.

These reforms should be developed in partnership with the sector and community, and include solutions from children and families. We all have a role in ensuring that children can have a good childhood and thrive.

It is essential for Queensland's future that there is bipartisan support for an Early Years Plan that includes addressing the determinants of educational engagement and wellbeing, by delivering measures that provide all families and children with access to adequate and affordable early learning services, secure housing, transport, healthcare and employment opportunities.



# 1

## **Universal access to kindergarten for all children aged three and four**

This alliance welcomes the Queensland Government's commitment to providing free kindergarten for four-year-olds. However, Queensland's children require a commitment to expanding this promise to three-year-olds with a clear timeline and detailed plan, so they have the same opportunities as children in other states and territories. The Workforce Strategy will need to be designed and funded with this goal in mind.

# 2

## **A holistic early childhood development system that supports early years development outcomes from conception to school**

The Queensland Government must commit to an early years guarantee for every child, with the medium-term goal of creating a holistic early childhood development system that meets the learning, health and development needs of every child. The plan will:

- Address and reduce the barriers that prevent families from accessing early childhood education and care and providing all children with a base entitlement of at least three days of early learning, and more for children experiencing disadvantage.
- Ensure all early education and care services meet the quality standards in the National Quality Framework.
- Provide more and better funding for joined-up maternity care, child health, allied health maternal mental health and family support

delivered in a network of welcoming hub environments.

- Ensure specialised support, like maternity care, allied health and playgroups, is universally available to children, parents and caregivers, through innovative partnerships and models of care that are integrated with early learning.
- Coordinate inter-agency and inter-government service delivery and funding arrangements to simplify the experience for families and increase efficiency.
- Increase investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled centres.
- Develop culturally responsive and inclusive early learning centres and family support services that remove the barriers faced by First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse families, and children with disability. This includes funding for specialised support and workforce development to reflects the diversity of needs for every child.
- Reform data sharing to enable effective delivery of a truly universal childhood development system so that every family can receive the support they need.
- Address workforce issues in allied health and child development support systems that impact the experience of children, families and the early childhood workforce.

# 3

## **A workforce strategy to attract and retain the best early childhood teachers, educators and experts in Queensland**

The early years workforce is in crisis, with high turnover and staff shortages impacting the entire sector. We need equal pay, qualifications and respect for our dedicated teachers, educators and other early years workers.

There can be no quality early learning without a qualified, secure and healthy workforce. There will be no available places in quality early learning centres without qualified and available staff.

The Queensland Government must show national leadership, and advocate at National Cabinet, to:

- Deliver immediate improvements in pay and conditions for the early years workforce, recognising that without early childhood educators and teachers, there is no early learning system.
- Make the Queensland teaching qualification and registration system nationally consistent to attract and retain the best early childhood teachers and better support educators to become teachers.
- Increase funding, opportunities and partnerships for professional development and training, specialised support services when needed with increased accountability for quality and content.
- Attract, grow and retain qualified early learning teachers, educators and support staff in regional and remote locations.

# 4

## **Nationally consistent implementation of the National Quality Framework, to ensure high-quality early childhood education and care**

The National Quality Framework (NQF) contributes enormously to the growth in quality and qualifications in the sector, and support for quality is reflected in parent surveys and federal inquiries, like the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission report.

However, the implementation of the NQF is fragmented and negatively impacting the sector and workforce. Workforce support of and trust in the Assessment and Rating process are essential to the provision of high-quality early childhood education and care.

This alliance is calling for the Government to support the creation of a national process to improve the consistent application of the NQF in Queensland.

This would include:

- Queensland teacher registration aligning to Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority recognised qualifications as a matter of urgency, including teachers working with children younger than four.
- Assessment and rating of all centres at least once every three years (as was the initial intention of the NQF but never achieved), and annually for centres that do not meet the National Quality Standard.
- Process changes to significantly reduce the administrative burden associated with Assessment and Rating so that educators can focus on providing high-quality education and care.

- Improved reliability and accuracy of the Assessment and Rating process, including additional and ongoing training for assessing Authorised Officers to build and maintain their understanding of high quality contemporary early childhood pedagogy, including ensuring that First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing are valued and reflected understandings of quality.

## 5

### Local solutions that are connected to communities

Queensland's children require a plan that responds to local and specific community challenges that families face with access to quality early learning and child development support. Where a child lives should not impact their long-term development or education, employment and wellbeing outcomes.

This plan would include:

- Place-based and place-focused solutions and partnerships that are developed and delivered in partnership with communities. These innovative, culturally safe and contextualised solutions would ensure children and families have access to specialised support, such as allied health services.
- Ongoing, sustainable and recurrent funding to ensure stability for families, children and services, and capital works funding to ensure education and care, and related health and support services are delivered in modern and accessible environments,
- Solutions to grow, attract and retain a new and existing qualified early learning and family support workforce in regional and remote locations and other difficult-to-staff locations.

## 6

### Strong, sector-supported advocacy at National Cabinet

The early childhood sector has been named a priority essential service by the Australian Government and is experiencing an era of rapid reform. This Alliance is calling on the Queensland Government to take a leadership role at National Cabinet by partnering with the sector to:

- Support an immediate improvement in pay and conditions for the early years workforce, recognising there is no early learning system without early childhood educators and teachers.
- Provide ongoing, sustainable and recurrent early childhood education and care funding to ensure stability for families, children and services, and capital works so education and care are delivered in modern and accessible environments, with strengthened quality regulations and penalties for not meeting quality standards.
- Increase and index the funding allocation to the Inclusion Support Program to match the hours a child attends early childhood education and care, noting that there is a funding gap between employing additional educators and the actual cost of those educators.
- Improve the coordination and integration of state and federal services.
- Abolish the Activity Test.

# ENDORISING ORGANISATIONS



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