

ELAA recommends action on national early learning masterplan

1 May 2023

Currently, there is no overarching national strategy to support the early years in Australia – no plan to ensure all Australian children have the same access to the best quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and no plan to harness the evidence-based benefits of quality early childhood education for all children, families, society, and the economy.

Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) has joined the national response to bridge this gap through a submission to the Commonwealth Government's 'Early Years Strategy'.

"A coherent Early Years Strategy would establish the foundations to underpin children's development across Australia. One in five children do not get what they need at present and start school behind their peers. The Government can set high aspirations for a quality, well-connected system that supports all children, particularly those who are vulnerable, to thrive," said Acting ELAA CEO, Megan O'Connell.

The ELAA Submission lays out four key principles and four policy priority recommendations for the strategy that the Commonwealth Government hopes will serve as a roadmap to a shared understanding of what children and families in Australia need in the early years.

"Our Submission focuses on how to improve participation in Early Childhood Education and Care, especially for children and families from Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities who are less likely to have access currently."

ELAA's Submission defines four guiding principles for the Early Years Strategy:

1. **Evidence base** – build on professionally researched evidence to address vulnerability and support all children to thrive
2. **Accessibility** – address operational, eligibility and funding silos existing between State and Commonwealth governments
3. **Equity** – recognise and cater to all Australians seeking access to ECEC regardless of culture, religion, language, gender identity, location, or relationship preferences
4. **Quality** – prioritise the delivery of quality ECEC via a professionally trained, recognised, and rewarded ECEC workforce.

"A Commonwealth Early Years Strategy needs to ensure all Australian children are ready to start school and can build the cognitive and social skills they need to thrive within our education system. It also needs to equip early childhood educators to deliver quality Early Childhood Education and Care while feeling valued and re-warded for their professionalism," said Ms O'Connell.

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To complement these guiding principles the ELAA Submission includes four priority policy recommendations:

- **System centralisation** – reduce barriers to accessing ECEC through a streamlined, 'no wrong door' system which simplifies access to different ECEC funding and support services
- **Wrap around services** – grow the role of ECEC as the universal platform by which vulnerable families and children access or are referred to 'wrap around' services such as speech pathology, Maternal Child Health nursing, family support and similar services
- **Co-government investment** – government funding of above-award ECEC teacher and educator pay rates to enable the recruitment and retention of a workforce capable of delivering and sustaining high quality ECEC
- **A funding model** that supports self-determination and sustainability within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities.

For more information regarding the ELAA Submission to the Commonwealth Early Years Strategy, including commentary on key areas requiring further research, arrange an interview with ELAA Acting CEO, Megan O'Connell, by contacting James Gardener at jgardener@elaa.org.au or 0413483182.

To view ELAA's full submission to the Commonwealth Early Years Strategy [CLICK HERE](https://bit.ly/3oSgMWY)
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