



Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) NSW
PO Box K35
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Via email: [REDACTED]

20 November 2023

Dear Dr Vincent

Response to the Interim Report on the Review of Early Childhood Education and Care

We thank you for this opportunity to respond to the Interim Report on the review of early childhood education and care, released on 20 October 2023.

Uniting NSW.ACT is the social services and advocacy arm of the Synod of the Uniting Church in New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory. We provide innovative and person-centred services that in 2022 supported over 130,000 people at all stages of their lives, including children, young people and families, older people, and people with disability. In responding to the Interim Report, we are drawing particularly on our experience as a provider of early learning, consisting of over 50 pre-schools, long day care and out-of-school-hours care services with over 4,200 enrolled children.

We endorse the recommendations to develop strategies to enable educators to deliver quality services, for full subsidies that increase affordability of services, and to address non-financial barriers to participation in early learning. It was positive to see several of our recommendations on the updated list in the Interim Report, and we acknowledge the efforts that IPART went into incorporating and/or amending the recommendations to collectively represent and encompass the submissions IPART received. We are pleased the Interim Report acknowledges that the NSW Government should develop an early childhood education and care workforce strategy that enables educators to deliver services at high quality (including having time away from direct interaction with children to plan, reflect, coordinate and engage with families and other professional such as health and disability care providers).

However, we would like to reiterate our recommendations that did not appear in the Interim Report. Namely, we renew our call for all levels of government to support services and programs to involve local communities, community groups and service providers to co-develop and implement custom, place-based strategies to improve engagement in early childhood education and care services.

We commend the Interim Report's recommendation for the Commonwealth Government to provide greater transparency around service fees and subsidies to reduce out-of-pocket costs for families, and the NSW Government to work with the sector. We would like to reiterate that

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the voices of children and families be meaningfully captured through direct consultations with the sector, and multiple opportunities and modes of participating in these consultations, e.g. community outreach, community forums, etc.

Finally, we would also like to renew our recommendations for Governments to:

- Refer to the sector as early education and care, instead of “childcare”;
- Promote the benefits of quality early learning for children, and the value of early childhood educators’ role in the community, by funding campaigns for these; and
- Support Early Childhood Australia’s 2021-2024 five Strategic Priorities for 2021-2024¹.

Thank you, again, for welcoming feedback on the draft recommendations. For more information, please contact Dr Tom McClean, Head of Research and Social Policy, at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Donna Lee
Head of Operations, Early Learning (Communities)

¹ Early Childhood Australia. (2021). ECA Strategic Plan 2021-2024.
<https://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ECA-Strategic-plan-web.pdf>