

PUTTING KIDS AT THE CENTRE OF OUR RECOVERY

This thinking is the key to long-term prosperity

Childcare funding is a hot topic right now. We think that's a good thing because every child deserves the best possible start in life!

There's lots more we need to do to bring the best life opportunities to kids and families here in Logan, and debate about the childcare system is an important way into that conversation.

We've heard lots about the 'pink recession', about women's workforce participation and the effective marginal tax rates for people going back to work after having kids. We've also heard a bit about the viability of the childcare industry. These are all key issues and worthwhile debates to have, and we are super supportive of proposals to strengthen the early learning system.

But at Logan Together there's one constituency that we think is actually more important than all of voices we've heard from so far – and that's our kids.

When our kids do well, our society and economy will do well. National productivity will increase, national education rankings will improve, welfare costs will go down. Child development is a human capital issue and one that offers the biggest gains for our long-term prosperity and wellbeing.

In this context, childcare costs are an important piece of the puzzle, but there's also a bigger picture to consider in growing our kids up well. A universal childhood development system is what we should be aiming for – one that includes improvements in health, family support and early learning. Wider and cheaper access to childcare is a good start but there's other key considerations (highlighted on this page and explained on the next)

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Here's other things we think are needed to build a universal early development system:

- 1. A new National Child Development Partnership driven by National Cabinet.**
- 2. A First 1000 Days National Agreement that ensures individualised care through pregnancy, birth and post birth for all babies and their parents.**
- 3. Home visiting by qualified child and maternal health staff for the first 2 years, targeting all higher needs babies and their parents.**
- 4. A strengthened and expanded Parents Next program that includes new investment with partners to deliver supported playgroups, parenting education and outreach and engagement to higher needs households.**
- 5. A new National Partnership on Early Learning to guarantee access to kindergarten for all 4 year olds, including much stronger measures to provide kindy in areas of market failure. This National Partnership would also establish kindergarten for 3 year olds in targeted locations, with a view to wider future roll-out.**
- 6. A national strategy to lift quality in the early childhood sector and fix pay and career structure problems for the early childhood workforce.**
- 7. A national roll-out of more intensive specialist childcare / kindergarten programs that support children with extra needs.**
- 8. A national roll-out of Child and Family Centres based on the highly successful Tasmanian model to build up local community infrastructure to support young children and their families.**

Such a plan would come at some cost and would require coordination across both Federal and State / Territory jurisdictions. Critically, it would also require coordinated delivery at the local level. But for all this effort we would receive a mighty national dividend that would endure for the rest of the 21st Century.

Now that's a recovery package worth debating.

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An 8 point plan to build a universal early development system:

1. **A new National Child Development Partnership driven by National Cabinet**
Because the States / Territories and Commonwealth all have roles to play and action needs to be coordinated.
2. **A First 1000 Days National Agreement that ensures individualised care through pregnancy, birth and post birth for all babies and their parents.**
This would address the big gaps in the pipeline of ante-natal care, birthing support, immediate post-birth support and then child and maternal health in the first years of life.
3. **Home visiting by qualified child and maternal health staff for the first 2 years, targeting all higher needs babies and their parents.**
Home visiting is proven to get results in ensuring babies are safe and healthy and parents are confident and supported. It also ensures more vulnerable children don't slip off the radar screen.
4. **A strengthened and expanded Parents Next program that includes new investment with partners to deliver supported playgroups, parenting education and outreach and engagement to higher needs households.**
Parents Next is a great way of staying in contact with families on parenting payments and guiding them towards helpful supports. But often those helpful supports are thin on the ground. More investment in playgroups, parenting education and engagement is a cheap and highly effective way of supporting families.
5. **A new National Partnership on Early Learning to guarantee access to kindergarten for all 4 year olds, including much stronger measures to provide kindy in areas of market failure. This National Partnership would also establish kindergarten for 3 year olds in targeted locations, with a view to wider future roll-out.**
Too many kids still miss out on kindergarten and 3 year old kindergarten increases the benefits.
6. **A national strategy to lift quality in the early childhood sector and fix pay and career structure problems for the early childhood workforce.**
Too many early learning services still don't meet quality standards. To give our kids the best start we want to support skilled educators to have long term careers in early childhood.
7. **A national roll-out of more intensive specialist childcare / kindergarten programs that support children with extra needs such as: autism; developmental delay; and trauma recovery.**
Getting in early to address development challenges gets big results and has a positive life-long impact. Specialist services like AEIOU (which focuses on autism) and others have demonstrated what can be achieved. It's time to scale up these responses and expand them to other challenges that require more intensive responses such as trauma recovery.
8. **A national roll-out of Child and Family Centres based on the highly successful Tasmanian model to build up local community infrastructure to support young children and their families.**
Child and Family Centres are proving important hubs for families and the community in those early years before school. They are a welcoming place where communities can come together to enjoy community life and access parenting supports, health and social services.