

9th April, 2010

The Honourable Colin Barnett MEC MLA
Premier & Minister for State Development
24th Floor, Governor Stirling House
197 St George's Terrace
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Premier

RE: Early Childhood Ministry

There have now been three Parliamentary Reports, essentially coming to the same conclusions, that children and families in Western Australia are being negatively impacted as a result of inadequate funding for early childhood services.

In August 2009 a group of Directors and Chief Executive Officers from 15 major early childhood peak bodies, stakeholders, professional associations and service providers, each committed to improving the lives of children, wrote to you and the Minister for Education asking for action, in particular the need for a whole-of-government response to early childhood education, care and health. To date, there has been no positive response to our appeals.

This coalition of major peak bodies, stakeholders, professional associations and service providers again calls on the Government to urgently progress the recommendations of these three Parliamentary Reports and in particular, the need for one Ministerial portfolio with responsibility for early childhood health, childcare, education and parent support programs.

With the momentum of change that is now imminent in our State for this sector, we are conscious of the leadership role Western Australia is required to take as a partner in the COAG early childhood reforms by establishing a governance structure to support the complex relationship between early childhood education, care and health. In particular, the new National Quality Agenda requires each State Government to create a governance structure that will facilitate the implementation of the National Quality Framework.

We acknowledge that there is no one perfect early childhood education, care and health governance structure as every jurisdiction has different political imperatives and different historical early childhood governance structures. However, what has been well documented through national and international research and the three reports tabled in Parliament is that jurisdictions which bring together the key elements of early childhood education, care and health under one ministerial and departmental umbrella are the most effective.

In October 2009, the Economic Audit Committee produced a report entitled "Putting the Public First – Partnering with the Community and Business to Deliver Outcomes" which states that Government will actively engage community organisations in policy development and will be supported by "...frank, fearless and well-informed strategic advice based on sound evidence and analysis of community needs and impacts". We reiterate again that we represent a coalition of

major early childhood peak bodies and community organisations that support the findings of the three Parliamentary Reports and urgently ask the State Government to find the political will to deliver a decision that will facilitate a whole-of-government approach to early childhood education, care and health.

Our children deserve a structure that supports their optimum development, and as a community we must demand this for our children.

Representatives from the undersigned group would greatly appreciate an opportunity to meet with you for half an hour during the week commencing Monday 3rd May to discuss the Government's response to the abovementioned Parliamentary Reports in more detail, in particular a governance structure that will promote a whole-of-government approach to early childhood education, care and health. We will contact your office to confirm receipt of this correspondence and a suitable time and date for the meeting.

Yours sincerely,



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