

8 June 2018



Elsbeth Dyer  
Committee Manager  
Legislative Assembly Committees  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Ms Dyer,

***Re: Responses to Question on Notice for the Inquiry into the adequacy of youth diversionary programs in NSW***

Thank you for the opportunity to give evidence at the public hearing on 30 April 2018 for the Inquiry into the adequacy of youth diversionary programs in NSW. Please find further comments below in response to the question taken on notice during the hearing.

**Connecting young people and families to support early on in life**

During the public hearing NCOSS gave evidence that early childhood education and care (ECEC) can play a crucial role in early intervention and ensuring vulnerable children and families are connected and supported right from the start. This has positive flow-on impacts and can minimise the risk of children developing adverse outcomes later in life.

We know there are many strong examples in NSW of ECEC services acting as key hubs and 'soft entry points' that engage families that would otherwise be missed in the system, and link them to a variety of early childhood support, community and health services.

This is certainly the case with preschools such as Jarjum Preschool (Lismore), Wee Waa and District Preschool, Condobolin Preschool and Coraki Preschool. These centres are deeply connected and respected in the community. They provide wraparound support for vulnerable families, including food, transport and health screening programs, and connect families to the services they need.

Aboriginal-led ECEC services have shown particular success in improving outcomes for Aboriginal children by supporting them and their families to stay connected to their culture, community and country. For example, Jarjum use art to help deliver their Bundjalung Learning Program, which includes intentional learning to teach traditional language and stories.

Jarjum's wraparound support model has also meant that children who attend a minimum of 1.5 years achieve maximum numeracy outcomes and reduced developmental delay.

We believe ECEC is a critical enabler of a successful early intervention system and there is considerable opportunity for early intervention services in NSW to work more closely with ECEC services towards the goal of universal access and improved outcomes for children later in life. Further, there is scope to build on the potential for ECEC services to provide pathways

through which developmental and other issues can be identified early and ensure families are connected into a more targeted service system.

To enable this, as part of our [2018/19 Pre-Budget Submission](#) NCOSS has been advocating for the establishment of \$250 million Early Childhood Education Investment Fund (the Fund), to complement existing funding measures and ensure vulnerable children are able to access the full benefits of quality early education. The Fund is envisaged to be a flexible and complementary mechanism that would resource and support ECEC services to act as key hubs and provide vulnerable families with those pathways to other services. It would also support services that currently use these holistic, whole-of-community approaches effectively, such as those examples given above, to scale up their work.

In NSW, we spend less per child than most other jurisdictions in Australia when it comes to ECEC investment. Greater investment is needed to support cross-sector collaboration, better data collection, and mapping of existing services and gaps in delivery, and to ensure children get the best start in life and thrive across their life cycle.

If you would like to discuss any of the issues raised in more detail, or require any further information or input, please do not hesitate to contact Elyse Cain, Advocacy Manager, on [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Tracy McLeod Howe  
Chief Executive Officer

