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MEDIA RELEASE

Ensuring children get the best start

How can we make it easier for families to access services to monitor their children's development?

A new inquiry by the Committee on Community Services will look at improving access to early childhood health and development checks. The Committee is considering how to overcome barriers that affect access to health checks that track children's progress against developmental milestones.

The 2021 Australian Early Development Census showed an increase in developmental vulnerabilities for children living in the most disadvantaged areas of NSW, and those living in the most remote areas of the state. There was a similar increase in developmental vulnerability for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in NSW.

'Early childhood health checks are a vital way to identify potential developmental issues and intervene early. Everyone in our community should have access to regular health checks for their babies and young children', said Committee Chair, Clayton Barr MP.

'Our inquiry is looking at the barriers that prevent or limit parents – especially those in vulnerable communities – using services that monitor their child's growth and development', said Mr Barr. 'It's important that we address gaps in outcomes for children in culturally and linguistically diverse communities, rural and remote communities, and Aboriginal communities.'

'We're also keen to hear about access to services and support for children who might be falling behind in reaching their developmental milestones.'

As part of the inquiry, the Committee will look at the recruitment and retention of health professionals to address workforce shortages, and funding for early intervention programs and screening to ensure children get support for developmental issues.

More information, including the inquiry's terms of reference, and how to make a submission, is available on the Committee's [webpage](#).

Submissions close on **29 February 2024**.

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