

**Submission
No 8**

IMPROVING ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT CHECKS

Name: Ms Amana Walkaden

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To Whom it May Concern,

I am formally lodging a submission for the parliamentary inquiry into improving access to Early Childhood Health and Development Checks. I have been a Child and Family Health Nurse within the Northern Sydney Health district for over 15 years, I currently now work as a Clinical Nurse Educator within this district and feel very passionate about improving overall health outcomes for all children and their families.

Particularly in addressing gaps in outcomes for vulnerable children and families, including those in aboriginal communities and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. In my role I work with many families from culturally diverse families, including but not limited to Tibetan's, Nepalese and Aboriginal and Torres Strait and feel they are so under-represented and not always offered the same level of health care that other communities are entitled to. I am keen to be involved in helping close this gap and understand why this may be happening, but also help promote strategies on how to improve access to these families.

I believe that there are many barriers that affect parents' access to developmental routine health checks not being attended to, such as language, accessibility, time and availability, decrease in health professionals availability, decrease of secondary services the health service is able to provide if needed and this in turn can lead to poorer health outcomes, increased need for extra support once the child reaches school age, increased cost to local and federal governments by increased need for health care and involvement.

Term 4 addressed in the terms of reference looks at early screening to ensure children are given support, however, many of the primary and secondary screening tools we use are not offered in vast majority of languages, therefore widening the gap in potentially more vulnerable children not accessing necessary health care.

Recruitment and retention of staff can be seen as a widespread area of concern for Nursing, however in my experience, many nurses I work with are passionate and love their job and the difference they can make to the families we care for. However, with an ageing workforce, offering flexibility in workdays and hours. Also from an educator's perspective, nurturing and encouraging new staff and building a strong culture of teamwork and family friendly environment.

I would like to be part of this inquiry to help make a change and promote a positive future for child and family health, ensuring staff retention, looking at offering services in a different and modernised provision of services, comparatively to how it has typically been offered in the past, moving away from the 9-5 and Monday to Friday clinics, recognising that many of the families we now see work and this limits their access to our services as well.

Perhaps more mobile, or flexible models of care. Thank you very much for considering this submission,

Amana