

**Submission
No 15**

IMPROVING ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT CHECKS

Organisation: NSW Health Speech Pathology Advisory Network

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The NSW Health Speech Pathology Advisory Network supports developmental checks and surveillance as an integral part of the identification of children's health needs in the first 2000 days.

Health in the first 2000 days forms the basis for mental and physical health and wellbeing through the rest of the life course with consequent benefits to population health, national productivity, innovation and the prosperity of the nation. Identification and addressing of early childhood concerns saves society billions annually as supported by data from the Royal Foundation and the London School of Economics. Early identification and intervention is vital in reducing the downstream effects and costs in education, justice and employment services.

Timely, comprehensive, valid and reliable developmental checks and surveillance by appropriate health professionals (including allied health) are essential for the identification of developmental concerns for all children. A targeted workforce strategy for screening of vulnerable populations must be considered to facilitate improved accessibility while acknowledging the complexity and additional resources required.

NSW Health Speech Pathology Advisory Network supports the introduction of a targeted strategy to better facilitate screening and early identification of children 2-2½ years. This would complement the Brighter Beginnings program currently targeting 4-year-olds, allowing for earlier intervention to address identified concerns.

We acknowledge will require resources to investigate local barriers and local solutions and NSW Health Speech Pathology Advisory Network is keen to participate in this review. A responsive local approach is particularly critical for vulnerable populations in metropolitan, rural and remote areas.

In summary, NSW Health Speech Pathology Advisory Network supports the development of the right tool, administered at the right age, with appropriate staffing and resources to ensure global accessibility to a developmental check and subsequent intervention.