

Summary of InSpEd Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Thriving Kids Initiative

Following are the main points included in InSpEd's submission in October of this year. The full submission will be available to members on the member page.

The focus of our submission was on the following terms of reference:

- Evidence-based information and resources and program effectiveness
- Domestic and international best practice
- Gaps in workforce support and training required to deliver Thriving Kids
- Mechanisms that would allow a seamless transition through mainstream systems for all children with mild to moderate support needs

We made the point that the roll-out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) has resulted in new players offering early childhood intervention (ECI) supports, with many of these being private providers. This has resulted in a change in the qualifications and expertise of professionals providing support for infants and young children and their families, many of those in the past being early childhood special educators. We suggested that good foundational supports would include support for capacity building in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings, supports that are best provided by qualified early childhood special educators who would be familiar with evidence-based practice including the need to embed interventions into the naturally occurring routines and activities in the family home and in the community, in particular in early childhood settings.

Recommendations

1. State governments need to ensure that evidence-based foundation supports are provided to infants and young children with disabilities and delays, including children with autism spectrum disorder and intellectual disability.
2. Evidence-based foundation supports should be either provided or supported by qualified and experienced professionals who have completed a course in early childhood intervention that includes the evidence-based content identified in the research and embedded into the national and international best practice guidelines.
3. Evidence-based foundation supports for infants and young children with developmental delay/disability and autism should be provided:
 - in naturalistic environments such as the family home and community settings, including ECEC settings; and
 - by professionals with appropriate education, or allied health qualifications who are able to work collaboratively with families and other professions to support the child's learning and development.
4. Evidence-based foundation supports:
 - should be tailored to meet the individual needs of the children and their families and not based on a diagnosis; and

- should be supported by specialists with qualifications and expertise in early childhood intervention, with skills and knowledge including:
 - knowledge of and ability to implement evidence-based interventions
 - ability to monitor child progress to ensure that services delivered are effective and produce the desired child outcomes
 - knowledge of and willingness to implement nationally and internationally recognised best practice guidelines in early childhood intervention
- 5. Quality postgraduate courses in early childhood intervention should be established in each state.
 - These should provide the additional skills required for allied health professionals and educators to work in ECI roles.
 - Standards for such courses need to be developed and adherence to these standards monitored.