

‘Starting Now’ provides roadmap for State-Federal cooperation to secure the benefits of early childhood reform

- *Briefing paper from Centre for Policy Development charts the coordinated implementation of State and Federal Government commitments to deliver a universal early childhood system*
- *Starting Now recommends actions to ensure high-quality, accessible and affordable education and care, attract and retain a skilled workforce, and embed a shared roadmap to a universal early childhood system*
- *Starting Now follows the influential 2021 report [Starting Better](#), and recent announcements in line with its recommendations across State and Federal Governments*

SUNDAY 31 JULY 2022 – Australian Governments must pursue coordinated action to harness the momentum of separate investments in a universal early childhood system in order to make Australia the best place in the world to be a child, and to raise one, a briefing paper from the Centre for Policy Development has recommended.

The *Starting Now* paper follows CPD’s influential *Starting Better* report released in November 2021, which governments nationally have drawn on in recent investments in early childhood. *Starting Now* charts the coordinated system design required to ensure that commitments at a State and Federal level deliver a triple dividend of improving outcomes for children, supporting workforce participation and boosting the economy.

The paper recommends swift and coordinated action in three key areas:

- **Action to give parents the confidence to balance work and home** by ensuring education and care is available and affordable. This includes: Accelerated changes to subsidy arrangements, the introduction of an ACCC mandate to ensure additional funding flows through to families and workers, and smarter spending coordination between governments to address child care deserts.
- **Action on rewarding, secure early childhood careers** so children and families can work with early childhood professionals they know and trust. This includes appropriate valuation of early educators’ work, making early childhood careers a priority at the national jobs and skills summit, a tripartite dialogue between unions, employers and government, investment in training for early childhood professionals
- **A national mission for a universal early childhood guarantee** for young children and families. This includes a formal agreement between First Ministers to work together on a universal early childhood system, with a reform task force to design it, a special commissioner to lead the Productivity Commission review to support the delivery of a universal system and long-term funding agreements with reform-ready leaders, and to commence work on the national early years strategy by bringing all critical portfolios together to improve outcomes for children and families



Centre for Policy Development Fellow and Early Childhood Development Council co-Chair Leslie Loble said it was vital to harness the momentum generated this year by investments announced by both Federal and State Governments.

“Governments have recognised that early childhood reform is the key to delivering economic, educational and social progress, and they have made it a top policy priority.”

“We must take this opportunity to harness the momentum into an enduring shared mission for which all governments are responsible, and which secures this triple dividend that is so important to our future prosperity.”

Centre for Policy Development Deputy CEO Annabel Brown said that structured and coordinated action between governments was critical to capturing the benefits of a universal early childhood system.

“Fragmented reforms - however well-intentioned - will not build an enduring system that Australian families can trust.”

“Right now our leaders have the opportunity to convert today’s political will into a coordinated mission for generational reforms that will enrich our children’s lives, create a more equal and prosperous society, and lock in the wellbeing of generations of Australians.”

ENDORSEMENTS FOR ‘STARTING NOW’

“*Starting Now* gives us an evidence-informed blueprint for Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments to cooperate on a mission that puts children at the centre of early years policy. I encourage leaders to consider this urgently because the work on systems redesign needs to start now.”

- **Anne Hollonds, National Children’s Commissioner, Australia Human Rights Commission**

“This isn’t just about making a fairer society, with half a million job vacancies and chronic skills shortages across the economy, it’s also an economic imperative. This is critical work towards eliminating some of the barriers that stop women working to their full potential and hold back our economic growth.”

“We look forward to working with the government to tackle this challenge so people can get back into the workforce, to give families choices and build on our momentum down the path to recovery.”

- **Tim Reed, President, Business Council of Australia**



“Australian children, women and business need a system that everyone can count on to make work, life and family fairer. Pursuing a triple dividend of economic returns, thriving children and more equal workforce participation for women is urgent business for Australia. That is why Chief Executive Women is endorsing the *Starting Now* report.”

- **Sam Mostyn, President, Chief Executive Women & Deputy Chair, Centre for Policy Development**

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The [Centre for Policy Development](#) is one of Australia’s leading independent policy institutes. Our core model is threefold: to create, connect, and convince. We create ideas from rigorous, evidence-based, cross-disciplinary research at home and abroad. We connect experts and stakeholders to develop these ideas into practical policy proposals. We then work to convince governments, businesses and communities to implement these proposals.