



EARLY LEARNING AND CARE  
COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

# Early Learning and Care Council of Australia

## ***Submission to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) on:***

*National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Early Childhood Early  
Intervention (SUBMISSION - National Disability Insurance Scheme  
(NDIS) Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) Reset Project  
:Supporting young children and their families early to reach their full  
potential*

February 2021

National Disability Insurance Agency  
GPO Box 700  
Canberra ACT 2601

**SUBMISSION - National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) Reset Project :Supporting young children and their families early to reach their full potential**

The Early Learning and Care Council of Australia (ELACCA) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) Reset Project :Supporting young children and their families early to reach their full potential.

ELACCA acknowledges the ongoing commitment of the NDIA to supporting an approach tailored for young children and their families.

This submission addresses the recommendations specifically relevant to ELACCA's remit and membership.

**1. About the Early Learning and Care Council of Australia**

The Early Learning and Care Council of Australia (ELACCA) advocates for the rights of all children and their families to equitably access quality early learning and care, particularly for children experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage. We seek to increase awareness of the value of quality early learning and care to reflect its foundational role within the Australian education system alongside primary and secondary school education.

As the peak body for providers operating more than 2000 early childhood education and care services across Australia, we are an experienced and influential national voice in discussions involving the early learning and care sector. We regularly engage with sector stakeholders, state and federal governments and corporate entities to generate a greater awareness of the importance of investment in the sector.

The collective knowledge of our members gives us the expertise to provide strategic and factual advice and contribute to all areas of planning and policy development for early learning and care in Australia.

We are responding to this consultation as two of the four pillars of our strategic plan are:

- Equity – we aspire to improve equity of access to early learning for all children by leveraging the scale of our members to enable greater inclusion of first nations children and children experiencing disadvantage and vulnerability.
- Advocacy – we aspire to generate greater awareness of the importance of investment in quality early learning and care by leveraging the scale of our members to advocate for the rights of all children, regardless of their circumstances, to access early learning.

## 2. ELACCA response to relevant recommendations

### a. NDIA recommendation 2: supported

**Clearly and consistently, communicate the intent of the new Early Childhood approach and the Agency's support for best practice, so families understand how the approach informs positive outcomes for young children.**

A clear communication strategy is required that includes a range of resources and support materials and a range of channels so that educators, health, community, and recreation services can understand the Agency's approach and facilitate communication with families.

### b. NDIA recommendation 5: supported

**Continue to work with federal, state and territory governments to identify gaps and strengthen the role of mainstream services, so all young children receive support from the appropriate system when they need it.**

### c. NDIA recommendation 12: not supported

**Increase Early Childhood partner capacity to provide Short Term Early Intervention (STEI) support to eligible young children and families for longer.**

### d. ELACCA recommendations in response to NDIA recommendations 5 and 12

**That the quality mainstream early learning sector be recognised by the NDIA as a critical component of the early childhood development service mix, including for implementation of short-term early interventions (STEI).**

A child's environment and experiences in his or her early years set key pathways for life. A child who starts behind stays behind and targeted, evidence-based early childhood interventions can prevent this from happening.<sup>1</sup>

Quality early learning services are focused on tailored, individualised learning environments. Highly qualified Educators work with and plan for each child, acknowledging and prioritising their unique strengths and capabilities. In quality early learning services, children are supported to develop key skills required for positive learning and life outcomes. These include skills to solve problems, think, communicate, control their emotions, and form relationships, to self-regulate, focus attention, be enthusiastic learners, persist in completing tasks and work in teams as well as independently. Learning takes place in a social context where learning to make friends is as important as knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

Quality early learning services are important natural environments where children with diverse abilities learn, and develop new abilities alongside and with each other. They are where

---

<sup>1</sup> Pascoe, S. & Brennan, D. (2017) Lifting our game : report of the review to achieve educational excellence in Australian schools through early childhood interventions. Melbourne, Vic: Victorian Government, December

<sup>2</sup> Early Learning: Everyone Benefits. (2017). p.31.

targeted intervention strategies, when required, can be layered onto, and embedded into a child's play-based routines and activities.

Quality early learning services are part of the universal non-stigmatising children's services system. When specialist practitioners, such as allied health, are part of the team around the child, children with disabilities can have their short- and longer-term interventions integrated into their early learning program. This increases the likelihood of generalisation and increases the opportunities for families to work, study, participate in the community and manage everyday family responsibilities.

**That the NDIS support the systems, processes, and personnel time for structured, evidence-based Individual Family Service Planning to strengthen teams around each child, including for those that are not eligible for the NDIS.**

No one sector or organisation can provide what is needed to enhance the wellbeing, learning and development of children with disabilities and their families. It requires a co-ordinated, if not integrated, ecosystem.

ELACCA does not support increasing the scope and/or scale of the NDIA EC partners, increasing the need for families and children to engage with a disability specific provider. Rather, ELACCA recommends that the NDIS support the systems, processes, and personnel time for structured, evidence-based Individual Family Service Planning to strengthen teams around each child<sup>3</sup>, including for those that are not eligible for the NDIS. This will support the NDIA principle for choice and control and will strengthen the pathway from the NDIS to co-ordinated mainstream community services and supports, including quality early learning.

***e. NDIA recommendations 7 & 8.: supported***

**Improve sector wide understanding of how to identify families and young children experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability and tailor culturally appropriate services and resources so they can benefit from early interventions support.**

**Implement tailored methods of delivering supports for young children and their families living in remote and very remote areas to strengthen access to services.**

ELACCA recommends that EC partners work much more closely with the mainstream providers in community health, education, and early learning to strengthen access to services for disadvantage, vulnerable and isolated children, and their families.

---

<sup>3</sup> Team around the Child is a systems way of coordinating early interventions for children and families who have complex needs and require interventions from a number of practitioners. The TAC model incorporates capacity building and evidence-based practices including family-centred practice; strengths and interest-based practices; and the natural learning environment. National Guidelines for Best Practice in Early Childhood Intervention

**f. NDIA recommendation 17: supported**

**Introduce a 'capacity building support in natural settings' item in the NDIS Price Guide to encourage families and early childhood providers to prioritise supports delivered at home or other natural settings.**

In supporting this recommendation ELACCA recommends that ED partners and early childhood NDIS providers be required to co-ordinate with the Australian Government funded Inclusion Support Program (ISP)<sup>4</sup> providers when a child is to be, or is being, enrolled in an ISP eligible early learning service to increase co-ordination, reduce gaps and duplication and to maximise the time of the early learning educators when planning for inclusion of a child with a disability.

**3. Summary**

|                        |               |
|------------------------|---------------|
| NDIA recommendation 2  | Supported     |
| NDIA recommendation 5  | Supported     |
| NDIA recommendation 12 | Not supported |
| NDIA recommendation 7  | Supported     |
| NDIA recommendation 8  | Supported     |
| NDIA recommendation 17 | Supported     |

Your sincerely



Elizabeth Death  
CEO  
23 February 2021

**About ELACCA**

The Early Learning and Care Council of Australia (ELACCA) was incorporated in 2014 to promote the value of quality early learning and care as an integral part of Australia's education system. Our membership constitutes some of the largest early learning providers in the country from all parts of the sector, including both long day care and community preschool/kindergartens.

ELACCA represents a significant percent of the not-for-profit and for-profit providers operating over 2,000 services across Australia.

As well as promoting the value of quality early learning and the need for greater public investment, we advocate for the right of all children to access quality early learning and care, particularly children facing disadvantage. We do this by drawing on the broad knowledge and practical experience of our members and representing their views and issues to decision makers in government, the media and the public.

More information about ELACCA is available at: [www.elacca.org.au](http://www.elacca.org.au)

---

<sup>4</sup> The Inclusion Support Program (the program, ISP) is a key component of the Government's Child Care Safety Net, which commenced in July 2016, as an early element of the Child Care Package, introduced in 2018. The Child Care Safety Net aims to give the most vulnerable children a strong start, while supporting parents or carers to increase their activity including work, study, and training.