



Media Release
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Vulnerable children should be forefront concern from Productivity Commission's report

UnitingCare Australia looks forward to tomorrow's release of the Productivity Commission's draft report on Childcare and Early Childhood Learning, hoping it will pave a way forward for an increase in the proportion of disadvantaged and vulnerable children receiving early childhood education.

"We know that going to a quality preschool or early learning centre makes a huge difference in the lives of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Yet these children are also the most likely to miss out on that early learning during crucial years in their life," said Lin Hatfield Dodds, National Director of UnitingCare Australia.

"We hope that reforms which ultimately come from the final report will prioritise the needs of vulnerable children," said Lin Hatfield Dodds.

"Studies show the same thing we see daily on the ground. When disadvantaged children attend preschool their attainment rates in English and Mathematics are likely to improve, along with their ability to self-regulate and participate in a classroom setting when they go to school," said Trish Brown, Director of Children's Services for UnitingCare NSW/ACT.

"High quality is fundamental to these outcomes. Any reforms that are made following the final report need to preserve the quality of care and learning for young children.

"The National Quality Framework and Standards have been a great development, based in solid evidence showing what is best for children. We have invested in meeting or exceeding them and want to see them kept," said Trish Brown.

"The affordability of early childhood education and care is important and will be one aspect of the Productivity Commission's review, but we need to ensure that quality is not undermined to make it cheaper or we forgo a major opportunity to improve outcomes for children later in their life.

"It is great to see so much attention on young children. Investing in the early years is good for children and ultimately, good for all of us," said Trish Brown.

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UnitingCare Australia, an agency of the Uniting Church, represents one of the largest networks of social service providers in Australia, with a network that employs around 39,000 staff, supported by 28,500 volunteers, operating nationally across 1,600 sites in remote, regional, rural and urban Australia.