



**Media Release**  
**22 July 2014**

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## **PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION RIGHT TO FOCUS FUNDS ON GREATEST NEED**

UnitingCare Australia is pleased to see priority going to where need is greatest in the Productivity Commission's Draft Report on Early Childhood Care and Learning.

"Introducing a simple funding system in which subsidies are means-tested and based on the cost of providing a service rather than chasing fees charged is a positive direction for the system to head", said Lin Hatfield Dodds, National Director of UnitingCare Australia.

"It is encouraging to us that the report suggests focussing more funding on vulnerable children through measures such as a Disadvantaged Communities Program.

"Vulnerable children benefit most from early childhood education and care. We are pleased the report recommends ways to make it as likely as possible that those children will be connected to that support, through funding arrangements and a focus on integrated models.

"Our experience has been that by integrating education and care services with other services like parenting supports and maternal health clinics, it becomes easier for families and young children to access early learning and helps ensure that children receive more holistic support. The report's support of integrated models is a very encouraging sign," said Lin Hatfield Dodds.

While the National Quality Framework and Standards have been endorsed, UnitingCare Australia urges the Commission, and the Government, not to water down those standards if adjustments are made.

"Among a range of good ideas, one or two concerning suggestions do stand out. For example, we disagree with the idea that lower-level qualifications are acceptable for workers that care for children under the age of three", Trish Brown, Director of Children's Services for UnitingCare NSW/ACT.

"While we are pleased that the National Quality Framework and Standards have been endorsed we do not want to see adjustments made that diminish the quality of care being given to children of all ages and stages.

"It would be a mistake to reduce the quality of provision offered for under-3-year-olds. Qualified staff provide a better level of care, which children under the age of 3 deserve. These are the years when most significant learning and development is taking place", said Trish Brown.

“As the Commission continues its work we urge their focus to remain clearly on what is best for children and we look forward to further consultation with the Commission to refine the recommendations,” said Trish Brown.

ENDS

Lin Hatfield Dodds and Trish Brown are available for interview.

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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.*