

29 August 2025

The Hon. Mark Butler MP
Minister for Health and Ageing
Minister for Disability and the National Disability Insurance Scheme

Senator the Hon Jenny McAllister
Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme

Via emails: Minister.Butler@health.gov.au; jennifer.mcallister@aph.gov.au

Dear Minister Butler and Senator McAllister,

Thriving Kids

We write as three organisations collectively representing paediatricians across Australia to welcome the recently announced *Thriving Kids* initiative. Please refer to the Appendix for further information on our organisations.

Through this announcement, Minister Butler has set a bold agenda for Australia – for all children to thrive. This mission harnesses key Commonwealth investment, and we recognise the potential convergence with other funded policy agendas, including the Building Early Education Fund and the Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children.

We support the Government's commitment to enabling a sustainable NDIS and Foundational Supports system and ensuring a fit for purpose scheme that enables children and their families to thrive through an equitable system uplift.

With the 2024 Australian Early Development Census showing 12.5% of Australian children start school developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains *Thriving Kids* presents an exciting and momentous opportunity. The initiative enables innovative, effective and efficient service delivery, improved responsiveness to child, family and community need, and strengthened universal health and education services.

To achieve this, we know you will welcome the expert experience of our paediatricians to guide an evidence informed, early intervention approach, particularly for an initial cohort of children aged 0-8 years, with mild to moderate developmental delay or concerns including autism.

We are uniquely placed to provide advice about the support children need to thrive and ensure important health and wellbeing perspectives are at the forefront of decision making. As well as assessing and managing children, young people and their families in our daily practice, we work closely with nursing and allied health colleagues and others within the health, disability, education and social services sectors.

As experts in early childhood health and development, we can offer important input for the design and planning to come. Models such as child and family community hubs and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHO) offer positive examples. We acknowledge the significant and important task ahead and are keen to contribute to this vital reform in close collaboration with you and the Department.

Programs alone cannot address the inequities families face. What's needed is a sustained, integrated approach that prioritises prevention, early intervention, and equity. Our three organisations are eager to contribute our expertise to help shape a universal system of foundational supports that complements the NDIS and ensures every child gets the right support, at the right time, in the right way. We would be delighted to be on your advisory Committee.

We were thrilled to hear the appointment of Professor Frank Oberklaid AM FRACP as co-chair. We believe Professor Oberklaid's extensive experience and leadership in paediatrics, child health and development, and public policy make him an excellent person to lead this work.

We look forward to working with you in delivering an equitable and responsive universal system that ensures children, and their families, receive the best and most appropriate supports for their needs.

Please contact Justine Watkins, Manager, via the RACP Policy and Advocacy team on policy@racp.edu.au to continue to engage with us on this important endeavour.

Yours Sincerely



Dr Niroshini Kennedy
President, Paediatrics &
Child Health Division,
Royal Australasian College
of Physicians



Dr Katie Heathershaw
President, Australasian
Society for Developmental
Paediatrics



Dr Jacqueline Small
Chair, Academy of Child
& Adolescent Health

cc. Professor Frank Oberklaid AM FRACP

Assistant Federal Ministers for Health: The Hon Emma McBride MP; The Hon Rebecca White MP

Federal Ministers for Education: The Hon Jason Clare MP; Senator the Hon Dr Jess Walsh.

Federal Ministers for Social Services: The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP; The Hon Ged Kearney MP.

APPENDIX

Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP)

The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of over 23,500 physicians and 9,600 trainee physicians, across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. The RACP represents a broad range of medical specialties including paediatrics and child health, and adolescents and young adult medicine. Beyond the drive for medical excellence, the RACP is committed to developing policies which bring vital improvements to the wellbeing of patients, the community, the medical profession and the healthcare sector.

Paediatrics and Child Health Division (PCHD)

The PCHD advocates on behalf of our members and are committed to promoting the study of paediatric medicine by encouraging excellence in skills, expertise and ethical standards through training and professional development. The PCHD represents over 4,000 paediatricians and almost 2,000 trainees in Australia.

Australasian Society for Developmental Paediatrics (ASDP) (formerly NBPSA)

ASDP is a not-for-profit, member-led organisation, committed to advancing the health, development, and wellbeing of children and young people, particularly those with developmental concerns.

We have nearly 1000 members in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand who are doctors with a specialist clinical and/or academic interest in developmental paediatrics. Through support and education, networking and collaboration, we nurture a professional paediatric community, enabled to provide best-practice care for children with developmental needs.

Academy of Child and Adolescent Health (ACAH)

ACAH was established in 2016 as an organisation dedicated to promoting the health and wellbeing of every newborn, child and young person in order that they reach their maximum potential. Our membership is open to paediatricians, allied health professionals, nurses, trainees and medical students who participate in ACAH activities such as advocacy, education and networking.