

EARLY CHILDHOOD

A 23. WESTMAR INGLESTONE BRANCH

“That ICPA Qld lobby the Department of Education to ensure that all students enrolled in State Based Kindy Programs are provided learning support and access to resources upon commencement, with appropriate supporting medical evidence.”

Explanation:

With State Based Kindy Programs being implemented in school classrooms, setting supported foundations for learning in the vital early years is imperative for the student, teachers, support staff and fellow students. A supported Kindy child also allows support and learning for all students in the classroom setting. Starting in Kindy, gives the opportunity for support and learning to be enhanced before formal schooling years commence. Students who attend State Based Kindy Programs are already faced with geographical location hurdles and to have the learning program supporting them will ensure that no student is disadvantaged.

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S 8. CUNNAMULLA BRANCH

“That ICPA Qld lobby the relevant State Ministers and departments to immediately prioritise and fund re-establishing early childhood educational programs in recognised highly vulnerable rural and remote locations.”

Explanation:

There are families with young children wanting to attend play group and there is no playgroup available. The Cunnamulla library has recommenced in late May 2022 a one hour per week session of singing & story time as part of ‘The First Five Forever Program’ which children must be vaccinated to attend.

The Cunnamulla State School have the funding for an early childhood teacher 2 days per week through the Keeping Early Years in the Spotlight Program (KEYS) however they have been unable to fill the position.

A quote from a local Mum:

‘Basically, I want something, anything to take my daughter (10 months old) to. There is no active playgroup running in Cunnamulla. They KEYS group haven’t continued the play group at the state school, the health centre ‘Mums and Bubs’ has not been operating due to Covid and Tammy at the Cunnamulla Library has only just started the First 5 Forever program for the first time this year, last week.

I can already see my daughter is struggling socially, we recently went to an event where she screamed the entire event because she was not able to cope with the volume of people or children. The only social interaction my child gets is on FaceTime to her older cousins. It is heartbreaking for me as a mother to watch my daughter be disadvantaged because of where she lives. Is it really that hard for a playgroup to run in Cunnamulla once a week? Given the massive influx of children under 5 in Cunnamulla and surrounds this really needs to be a focus point. On top of the impacts on my daughter, I have felt isolated and have had few occasions to socialise since having my daughter. It would be nice to see other mums on a regular basis.’

2021 data indicates 47% of children start school in the Cunnamulla district developmentally vulnerable. The Early childhood education and Care department have been active in Cunnamulla since July last year and

no significant action or change has occurred

Results from the Australian Early Developmental Census have deteriorated since 2009 and Cunnamulla is one of 5 locations which are going backwards

Paroo shire has been nominated as a QLD state early childhood priority

The Paroo Contact Children's Mobile remains unfunded, Contact Inc (who own the equipment & did operate the service) have made no contact with Cunnamulla, the equipment including fully equipped Toyota Landcruiser 4WD with canopy all sit in Cunnamulla unused as there is no funding for the coordinator/teacher. The Paroo Contact Children's Mobile needs to get funding to immediately recruit staff to utilise the vehicle and extensive early childhood resources/equipment to offer regular scheduled supported playgroups to Eulo, Cunnamulla, Noorama, Quilpie and Thargomindah.

The Noorama Playgroup has been running for almost a year with on average 5 parents and 8 children in attendance, with a total membership of 10 core families and 20 children. The playgroup meets monthly and is run by volunteer parents, most with minimal experience with early childhood education.

The main issues this playgroup hopes to address include:

Improving statistics on disadvantaged school starters by better preparing our children in the early years

Access to qualified educators that can help parents learn how to interact with their children at home and identify developmental abnormalities. If required, they could assist with pathways to support services.

Ensure funding and services are reaching remote children.

Provide a socialisation opportunity for both children and parents.

Prepare families and facilities/services for Distance Education, which will be required in the near future.

Eulo State School has commenced a monthly playgroup in May 2022.

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