



The Hon Scott Morrison MP  
Prime Minister  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister

We write to you representing the *Every Child* campaign, an alliance of over 50 national organisations committed to elevating the needs of Australia's children and young people.

*Every Child* is concerned the looming threat of a recession will have the most impact on children and young people and is calling on the Australian Government to put them at the heart of national economic stimulus.

In the short term, *Every Child* supports targeted cash transfers to vulnerable groups and immediate investment in boosting the essential services workforce, including childcare, schooling and health. Every Child believe this directs the stimulus where it is needed most, including those regional communities grappling with high unemployment in the wake of the bushfires and drought.

Over the longer term, we are calling on the Government to implement a \$2 billion '*Thriving Children*' package. The package would stimulate local economies through a major building program of 200 multi-service hubs around Australia, equipped with health, early childhood, housing and financial support staff to support children, young people and families.

The *Thriving Children* package is a nation building funding stimulus to build and operate infrastructure for children. It features:

- \$1 billion for 100 purpose built multi-service hubs – each hub would cost \$8m to build and \$2 million to staff.
- \$1 billion for 100 community-controlled hubs to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.

Further information is attached.

Family pressures and the risk of harm to children and young people are known to escalate in tough economic times. It is incumbent on all of us to elevate the needs of children and young people and for Government to respond courageously in times of crisis. *Resilient Children* is a nation building economic stimulus that can benefit children and young people, families, businesses and communities.

*Every Child* would welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters with your Department in further detail and can be contacted at [Kirsty.Nowlan@benevolent.org.au](mailto:Kirsty.Nowlan@benevolent.org.au).

Kind Regards

Kirsty Nowlan  
Co-Chair

## ***Thriving Children – a stimulus response to protect children, young people and families***

### **Introduction**

The *Every Child* campaign believes that Australia needs new solutions to address the looming threat of a recession and the impacts it will have on children, young people and their families. *Every Child*, an alliance of over 50 organisations, believes there is a moment of opportunity to protect the economy and sure that our children continue to develop well through a major economic stimulus that prioritises new investment in infrastructure for children, young people and families.

We know what children need to develop, but equally we are aware that communities are grappling with a range of complex issues including the recent impacts of the drought and bushfires and that government and non-government organisations can struggle to provide the full range of interconnected services that families need.

The *Every Child* campaign believes Australia needs to turbo charge local place based service hubs across Australian communities. This will be a nation building stimulus that delivers new partnerships between government, business, not-for profits, and communities themselves. Investment in child and family support, accessible early childhood healthcare and education, legal support and financial advice will deliver for both the economy and Australian families

### **Thriving Children**

*Every Child* is calling for the Federal Government to take the opportunity economic stimulus creates to make both short and long term impacts on the impending recession.

*Every Child* supports targeted cash transfers to vulnerable groups and immediate investment in boosting the essential services workforce, including childcare, schooling and health. *Every Child* believe this directs the stimulus where it is needed most, including those regional communities grappling with high unemployment in the wake of the bushfires and drought.

In addition, we are calling on the Government to implement a \$2 billion '*Thriving Children*' package. The package would stimulate local economies through a major building program of 200 multi-service hubs around Australia, equipped with health, early childhood, housing and financial support staff and more, to support children, young people and families.

The *Thriving Children* package will feature a \$2 billion capital investment in infrastructure for children, young people and families.

### **Leadership - Recurrent Cost Contribution for staff to lead the new service model**

- \$1 billion
- \$10m – 100 support hubs (inc \$9 capital, 2 storey Office \$ 9-15m to construct with car park (Source: <https://www.lmigroup.com/RiskCoachCalculators/building-cost-calculator>) and \$1m recurrent staff)

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community controlled hubs**

- \$1 billion
- \$6 m capital - \$4 m recurrent costs x 100 hubs

The focus of the stimulus is the capital for the hub and the local jobs and income for businesses that will be generated in the construction phase. This provides an immediate economic boost to communities with construction jobs in the first instance and ongoing service delivery jobs as the hub begins operation.

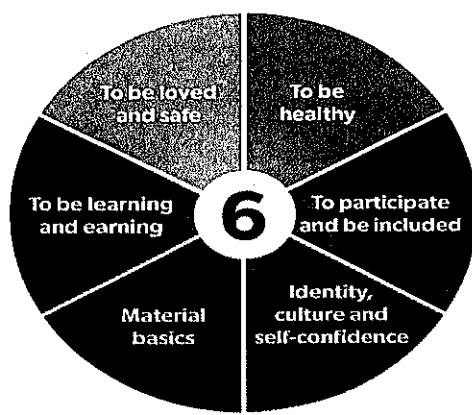
Communities would receive recurrent funding for leadership and co-ordination staff to establish the service model, with existing providers determining how the direct multi-agency services are delivered. Local service providers will shape how the hubs can best meet the needs of their

community using both existing and new resources. They can plan and develop their bids to the Federal Government encouraging collaboration between primary health networks, education, child and family services, housing and others.

### **Rationale**

Evidence tells us that for children and young people be healthy, safe and doing well *It Takes 6* primary needs to be met:

1. Be healthy
2. Be connected to community and culture
3. Have a strong identity and confidence
4. Have secure housing and income
5. Be safe and loved
6. Be learning and/or earning (ARACY Common Framework)



*Thriving Children* would provide access to wrap-around support for children, young people and families to meet these 6 crucial needs. Currently services are fragmented, in different locations and run by different agencies and providers. This makes them hard to access and increases the difficulty for families to get support and follow-up early, before problems deepen or reach a crisis point (Morag McArthur and Lorraine Thomson, AIFS, 2011). The *Thriving Children* hubs would integrate service delivery across child safety, health, housing, education and employment through multidisciplinary teams and co-location of multiple interconnected services.

The hubs would have 6 primary purposes:

- Provide the leadership, staff and infrastructure for agencies to co-locate to work and plan together;
- Be innovative in responding to the multiple needs children, young people and families have;
- Be pro-active in providing outreach to homes, early learning centres and schools;
- Deliver timely and ongoing support to children, young people and families;
- Focus on ways to prevent problems from escalating; and
- Put evidence of what works into action

Examples of this model exist in all jurisdiction but within a patchwork of providers, funding arrangement and governance that inhibits a more interconnected and universal application. *Thriving Children* proposes a 'scaling up' in regions across Australia to have impact and reach providing an opportunity to stimulate the economy and establish a national model that works for children, young people and families.

The Benevolent Societies' Early Years Centres (EYCs) are one-stop-shops or service hubs supporting the health, development, wellbeing and safety of families who have young children aged up to eight years. The centres employ a multidisciplinary staff who offer a range of universal and targeted early child development and support, maternity and child health services, home visiting, targeted family support, and long day care and kindergarten.

EYCs are located in socio-economically disadvantaged areas (according to the SEIFA index) where higher numbers of children who are developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains of the Australian Early Development Census live. EYC's work in partnership with other non-government service providers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations and the Queensland Government.

The Queensland Government's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services make it easier for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in communities to access culturally responsive support to improve their social, emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing, and build their capacity to safely care for and protect their children. The centres combine the functions of the existing family support programs into one community-run Family Wellbeing Service that deliver:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Support Service
- Tertiary Family Support services
- Targeted Family Support services
- Secondary Family Support Services.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations lead the design and delivery of these services to ensure support and responses are culturally safe and responsive, reflect community and family strengths, local needs and aspirations, leadership and cultural knowledge. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services workers collaborate with a wide range of culturally appropriate universal, secondary and specialist services, Family Participation Program services, placement services, and with each individual family, to plan and provide a tailored, holistic and coordinated response to their specific needs. This includes working with families with diverse needs — from prevention and early intervention support to help families at the earliest possible opportunity to prevent concerns and worries from escalating, through to intensive support for families already in contact with the child protection system.

### Conclusion

*Our Public Service, Our Future, Independent Review of the Australian Public Service* recognised that local solutions will be increasingly important to tackle issues that matter most to Australians. The review recommends a whole-of-government framework for place-based investment that promotes joint decision-making on services to better cater for communities' specific needs and opportunities. (© Commonwealth of Australia 2019)

*Every Child* is calling on the Government to consider the fallout for those most likely to experience hardship under a looming recession and provide targeted cash transfers to vulnerable groups and immediate investment in boosting the essential services workforce.

*Resilient Children* provides infrastructure for children, young people and their families. It provides an immediate economic boost to communities with construction jobs in the first instance and ongoing service delivery jobs delivering a lasting benefit to communities across the country.

The economic stimulus provided by *Resilient Children* provides a benefit across the national economy and compliments efforts already underway to reduce and mitigate hardship from a slowing economy and an impacted population.