



Media release
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REGIONAL AND RURAL KIDS BEING LEFT BEHIND: GOVT URGED TO TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION ON EARLY YEARS SUPPORT

Kids living in regional and rural Queensland need to be a key focus of government action to support children in their early years of life, an alliance of Queensland organisations supporting child development and education says.

The Thrive by Five Queensland Alliance – an alliance of more than 30 organisations from across the child development and wellbeing, education, university, union and early learning sectors – says no area of Queensland is immune from the issues impacting affordability and access to the full range of support kids aged zero to five need to thrive, but regional and rural areas are really bearing the brunt.

The call comes as the Queensland Government embarks on consultation on its draft early years strategy. The consultation period is due to end on 21 February.

“Kids and families in Queensland’s regional areas are being left behind due to a lack of government action to support kids in their early years, and the ripple effect is hurting whole communities across the state,” said Susan Harrison, Thrive by Five Queensland Alliance spokesperson and CEO of Bushkids.

“Cunnamulla – as was highlighted on Network Ten’s The Project [last night] – is a perfect example of a town bearing the brunt of successive governments, at both state and federal levels, failing to implement a roadmap for supporting our kids in their early years. The town is currently unable to cater for kids under two in the local childcare centre because of a lack of staff, which is having a devastating impact.

“We’re seeing kids missing out, parents unable to work and the whole town unable to attract the new workers it needs.

“Unfortunately, Cunnamulla isn’t unique. The issues we’re seeing there are mirrored in communities right across the state, and Australia more broadly. More than one million Queenslanders are living in an area with an acute shortage of childcare places.”

Ms Harrison said the Queensland Government’s new early years strategy, which is currently open for consultation, is a step in the right direction but any strategy needs to ensure regional and rural kids do not miss out.

“We’ve been calling on politicians of all persuasions to outline their plan for addressing the problems impacting kids and families. It’s great to see the current Queensland Government has made a solid start and we’re looking forward to working with them to ensure it delivers for Queensland kids. We’re also looking forward to seeing what the LNP and other parties have planned.

“Communities like Cunnamulla in regional Queensland can’t afford to suffer any longer. We need to see a roadmap for addressing the issues impacting kids which includes a range of robust measures including a plan to address early education workforce shortages.

“For too long essential our early years workers have been underpaid and undervalued. Addressing our workforce issues is fundamental to fixing many of the other issues facing our kids.

“This isn’t just important for little kids and their families, it’s important for all of us. It will help reduce the cost of living pressures facing many Queenslanders and it’s also one piece of the puzzle when it comes to dealing with youth crime.”

Thrive by Five’s Queensland Alliance is supported by Minderoo Foundation and includes organisations from across the child development and wellbeing, education, university, union and early learning sectors.

About Minderoo Foundation:

Minderoo Foundation takes on tough, persistent issues with the potential to drive massive change. We incubate ideas, advocate for systems change and accelerate impact. We push the limits of what is believed possible. Minderoo Foundation is proudly Australian, independent, forward-thinking and seeks effective, scalable solutions. Through bold, collaborative, and selfless action, we seek to dismantle the systems that entrench inequality and fight for a fairer future.

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