



minderoo
FOUNDATION

2017 PRE-ELECTION
SUBMISSION



WHAT CAN AN INCOMING STATE GOVERNMENT DO FOR VULNERABLE WESTERN AUSTRALIANS?

Minderoo calls on all major political parties contesting the 2017 State Election to respond to recommendations that the new State Government should:

**PROVIDE
UNPRECEDENTED
LEADERSHIP AND
FOCUS ON REDUCING
CHILDHOOD
VULNERABILITY.**

- Establish a Ministerial position responsible for children's well-being from pregnancy to age five with authority to review, direct and coordinate the related early childhood services of health, education, and childcare and child focused community development;¹
- Review existing services and infrastructure to identify the effectiveness, costs of delivery and any overlap of services;
- Develop a non-partisan 10-year multi-sector strategy to improve the well-being of Western Australia's children, and to better coordinate early childhood health, education and childcare and community services;
- Review existing evidence for the best ways to support families with children experiencing vulnerabilities and make this available to service providers; and
- Commit to a target, with annual reporting for the reduction of childhood vulnerability across Western Australia.

**STOP CHILDREN AND
FAMILIES FROM FALLING
THROUGH THE CRACKS
WHILE BUILDING ON
EXISTING MOMENTUM.**

- Audit all relevant policy areas to identify overlaps, gaps and direct new policy decisions;
- Undertake an evaluation of the current Child and Parent Centre model to identify opportunities to strengthen and expand it;²
- Investigate the opportunities of building childcare centres at primary school sites in low socio-economic communities; and
- Support the implementation of the Commonwealth Government's Connected Beginnings initiative across Western Australia.³

**HALT THE WIDENING
GAP BETWEEN
VULNERABLE AND
ALL OTHER WESTERN
AUSTRALIANS.**

- Fully support a national roll out of the Commonwealth Government's Healthy Welfare Card to replicate the positive results seen in the East Kimberley and Ceduna;⁴
- Identify appropriate regions/sites that the Commonwealth Government can use to trial the 'No School, No Pay' (payment of Family Tax Benefit linked to school attendance) concept and commit to sharing relevant school attendance data;
- Assist in establishing a Vocational, Training and Employment Centre (VTEC) for youth in incarceration at Banksia Hill Juvenile Corrections Centre;⁵ and
- Adopt an Aboriginal Procurement Policy that guarantees at least four per cent of all State Government contracts (either directly, or through subcontractors) are awarded to Aboriginal-owned businesses (with a minimum of 25 per cent Aboriginal ownership).⁶





WHY IS GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP AND LONG TERM THINKING NEEDED?

EARLY CHILDHOOD:

- The gap between the least and most vulnerable children is widest in Western Australia and Queensland.⁷
- Evidence shows that vulnerable children are more likely to go on to become vulnerable adults with poor life outcomes.⁸
- Governments have the strongest influence on how services are delivered, as they either deliver, fund or regulate most services.
- Services that impact children are delivered in the traditional 'silos' of health, education and community which increases the difficulty of coordinating services to those who need it most.
- This is exacerbated by the overlapping responsibilities of the Commonwealth, State and Local Governments.
- The trend towards service integration is a response to the above fragmentation and the difficulties families face in accessing services.
- Without State Government leadership and long term thinking, such efforts remain confined to one off programs or the determination of individual community members and are not scaled through ongoing policy commitments and Ministerial leadership.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS:

- Despite the Council of Australian Governments endorsing the National Indigenous Reform Agreement, the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal in Western Australia has widened across: school attendance and post-school qualifications; life expectancy and suicide; employment rates, full-time employment and income support dependency; housing conditions; and adult imprisonment, juvenile detention and children in care.⁹
- There has also been an overall increase in tobacco consumption, alcohol harm, and repeat offending.¹⁰
- The State Government continues to play a vital role in creating parity and must considerably improve Aboriginal early childhood, schooling, health, economic, housing and corrective services.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE:

- The 'No School, No Pay' (payment of Family Tax Benefit linked to school attendance) concept has the potential to replicate similar results seen by the Commonwealth Government's 'No Jab, No Pay' policy which saw more than 148,000 children receive vaccinations.¹¹
- Research also shows that average academic achievement declines with any absence from school and continues to decline as absences increase.¹² The Western Australian Auditor General has also warned that almost 80,000 students were at significant educational risk because they did not attend school regularly.¹³
- Government initiatives aimed at improving attendance need to start early and must encourage parental awareness of the importance of attending school.¹⁴

¹ Similar to the responsibilities of the Minister for Mental Health and Commission.

² Child and Parent Centres: <http://childandparentcentres.wa.edu.au/>.

³ Connected Beginnings: <https://www.education.gov.au/connected-beginnings>.

⁴ Department of Social Services, Australian Government, Cashless Debit Card Trial Progress Report (October 2016).

⁵ Creating Parity – The Forrest Review (Commonwealth of Australia, 2014) 41, 43. ⁶ Ibid 48.

⁷ Brinkman SA, Gialmas A, Rahman A, et al. Jurisdictional, socioeconomic and gender inequalities in child health and development: analysis of a national census of 5–year-olds in Australia. *BMJ Open* 2012; Further, children living in the most socio-economically disadvantaged areas are three times more likely to be developmentally vulnerable than those from the least disadvantaged areas. This variation reinforces the need to consider targeted policies in priority communities, within a universal platform.

⁸ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2015). Child protection Australia 2013–14. Canberra: AIHW.

⁹ Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Government of Western Australia, Progress Against Closing the Gap (2015).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Matthew Doran, 'Vaccination Rates in Children Up Since 'No Jab, No Pay' Introduced, Federal Government Says', ABC (online), 31 July 2016.

¹² Kirsten J. Hancock et al, Student Attendance and Educational Outcomes: Every Day Counts (Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, 2013).

¹³ Office of the Auditor General, 'No Improvement in Student Attendance Figures Since 2009: Auditor General' (Press Release, 19 August 2015).

¹⁴ Ibid.



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