

6.2 SUPPORT FOR THE THRIVE BY FIVE CAMPAIGN

Submitting Councillor: Stuart James

MOTION

That Council:

1. Endorse the Thrive by Five campaign to support high-quality, universally accessible and affordable early learning and childcare
2. Formally advise the Municipal Association of Victoria and the Australian Local Government Association, that Council has endorsed the Thrive by Five campaign and supports the Associations in their involvement in the campaign
3. Write to Prime Minister Scott Morrison, the Leader of the Opposition Anthony Albanese, the Minister for Education and Youth Alan Tudge, the Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education and Youth Amanda Rishworth and local Federal Members of Parliament, seeking bipartisan support for the campaigns objectives

INTRODUCTION

During my time on Council, improving services available to parents of young children has been a primary focus of mine. Whilst we have made some very successful changes in this area, especially with regards to the introduction of Council facilitated playgroups, fundamental and systemic reform of formal childcare education for children under the age of five is needed. This is not something that can be addressed at a local level. The Thrive by Five campaign pushes for key widespread reforms nationally and should be supported.

DISCUSSION

I am calling on Councillors to support the Thrive by Five campaign. Neuroscientists estimate that around 90 percent of the brain develops between birth and the age of five.

This makes the early years critical for lifelong learning and wellbeing. Early learning can help give children the best start in life, impacting on their future health, wellbeing, working potential and social participation.

Every child should start school ready to learn, with the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

But Australia's early learning and childcare system has become outdated and expensive.

Although it's an essential service, Federal Government funding has failed to keep pace, leaving families out-of-pocket with expenses and creating unequal access to appropriate, high-quality early learning and childcare. This flies in the face of the well-established and well-supported fundamental principal in Australia, that everyone should have free access to a good education.

Reform of the early learning and childcare system will drive workforce participation, particularly for women, boost productivity and GDP, boost our nation's education performance, and give children the best possible start in life.

Reducing out-of-pocket costs for working families will flow directly into increased household spending. A high quality, universally accessible and affordable early learning system will allow

an extra 98,800 parents, mainly women, to get back into the workforce, boosting productivity and the economy.

Many Australian women don't work more than three days a week because that is the tipping point where the cost of care becomes unreasonably expensive when compared with earning potential. As a result, these women experience difficulty when they try to increase the amount they work and face lifelong challenges through lost earnings and low superannuation. Many women drop out of the workforce because of the cost of early learning and childcare.

Local Government runs hundreds of centres around Australia and is a key provider of early childhood education.

This is not a party-political issue; the campaign calls on all sides of politics to commit to supporting early learning and childcare.

CONCLUSION

I recommend that Monash supports this campaign and that we call on all parties to commit to supporting a high quality, universally accessible and affordable early learning system that creates a brighter future for our children