Getting the basics right – goals that would deliver a good national children’s services system

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Introduction

Over the past three decades Australia’s children’s services system has been transformed from a predominantly publicly provided and operated community based system to a privatised, commercial market driven system. Today 70 per cent of our childcare services are privately owned and more than 25 per cent of our services are owned by one shareholder company.

The National Association of Community Based Children’s Services (NACBCS) is an advocacy body and has been the principal force behind the retention of community based children’s services in Australia. NACBCS was formed in 1982 following the reporting of a federal government review of Australia’s Children’s Services Programme. This report, which became known as the Spender Report after the review committee’s chair John Spender, was never published but details of its recommendations were leaked. While many recommendations in the report were welcomed, some recommendations were strongly opposed, including recommendations that commercial services be subsidised by the federal government. Around the nation childcare advocates labelled such commercialisation of child care as inappropriate and destined to lead to poorer quality care as profit takers entered the service system and the service system became a market place. NACBCS came into being as the organising vehicle for these advocates and has remained an active advocacy body over the past three decades. It aims to protect a quality children’s services system and has put forward policy initiatives designed to curb the worst that commercialisation has brought to Australia’s children’s services.

One of the frustrations for the community childcare advocates has been that through this period the childcare debate has been
relatively marginalised. Apart from calls for measures that would impact reggressively on families such as tax deductibility and work-based child care, there has been little interest from the broader community, including women’s groups, in an holistic childcare policy debate about quality, affordability and equity. Getting widespread support for child care and its role in the broader context of work and life, the economy and children’s welfare has been a challenge for childcare advocates through these decades. The Australian Social Science Academy, bringing together a diverse range of economists, social scientists, academics, researchers and others was a much welcomed initiative, critical to garnering broader support for a good national childcare policy.

This chapter addresses the question of appropriate goals for a good children’s service system from the NACBCS perspective. In writing this I have drawn on the NACBCS history as it provides a picture of the evolution of the policy debate about child care and children’s services in Australia. For those interested in a more comprehensive history of child care in Australia, Deborah Brennan’s *The Politics of Australian Child Care, Philanthropy to Feminism and Beyond* (1998) is recommended.

**Looking back through history**

It is not that long ago that I wrote a paper entitled ‘The Dismantling of Australia’s Children’s Services System’ (Wannan 1997). It was in 1997 in response to the federal government’s budget which continued the late 1980s policies of the Fraser government, which had effectively eroded the community based childcare sector as the foundation and the driving force for children’s services in Australia. That budget removed $350 million from the children’s services program, ceased funding for the operations of community based services, transferred funding to parents and put limits on the number of hours for which federal government subsidised care would be provided for both working and non working parents. Such funding policies created uncertainty for childcare providers and fostered the growth of commercial services in an environment of wasteful and destructive competition. There was no policy framework to enable services to develop in areas of need, nor to ensure that they enhanced local community development or drove quality as a core business
outcome. This federal government budget fostered the rapid growth of commercial child care and ultimately publicly-listed corporate child care as the dominant player in Australia’s children’s services system; community based care could no longer grow.

For those of us who had fought for years to secure federal government commitment and funding for children’s services this was very bad policy with very poor goals. Fostering commercial child care and funding parents directly to enable choice rather than funding to sustain a quality service system was bad for children, bad for parents, bad for communities and ultimately bad for the Australian economy and society generally.

Delivering for children

For NACBCS, the national peak children’s services advocacy organisation, the goals of a good national childcare policy relate to all children, their parents, their communities and the Australian economy and society. A good policy will deliver positive outcomes for all of these stakeholders.

The most fundamental goal for a national children’s services policy must be to achieve a nationwide network of sustainable, quality community owned, not-for-profit early years children’s centres. Only then will we have a system of services focused on meeting the needs of all stakeholders:

- children’s need to develop, learn and enjoy their childhood
- parent’s need to work, raise their children and contribute to their community life
- the community’s need for a strong, inclusive social fabric with adults, children and community groups well connected and supported
- Australia’s need for a strong, vibrant economy in which everyone has the opportunity to live well and to participate.

NACBCS is an organisation whose core business is advocacy for quality children’s services. This means we focus in the main on policy. NACBCS believes that the children’s services system operates
within a broad context, one that relates to family wellbeing, women’s opportunities to participate in society and in the paid workforce, health of the economy and the need for strong communities that nurture, protect and support children. This broader context cannot be ignored when developing policy advice; thus NACBCS believes the interests of the nation as a whole are inextricably linked to having a good children’s services policy.

NACBCS also uses the term ‘children’s services’ rather than ‘child care’ because we believe good policy will relate to all children and thus be capable of delivering a range of early childhood services. Historically, Australia’s children’s services sector has been segmented into a number of silos – child care, preschool or kindergarten, family day care, outside school hours care, mobile care and special services for Aboriginal communities. NACBCS sees itself as having a primary responsibility to ensure all children have access to the service response best suited to their need and believes that the separation of service types, with separate policy frameworks and different funding arrangements, has been a real barrier to progressing best use of available resources for young children and to maximising responsiveness from all services. In this chapter I use the term children’s services to encompass the full range of early childhood services.

The evolution of national policy goals

For NACBCS the goals of a good national children’s services policy remain today as they were first developed three decades ago by the children’s services movement and articulated by Community Child Care Victoria (CCC). CCC is the Victorian children’s services peak advocacy organisation and the Victorian branch of NACBCS. It was formed more than 30 years ago and was the principal architect of community based children’s services. The early goals NACBCS called on governments to adopt were:

- the provision of universally accessible services, that is, ensuring that all Australian children eventually have access to the services they need, when, where and for how long they need them
- the fair and equitable distribution of resources, that is, between children, families, services (across Australia)
• planning and delivery on a local and neighbourhood scale

• the provision of services that are culturally relevant, that is, take account of the needs, values and lifestyles of all the groups in the community the service exists to serve (CCC 1984).

A national policy with these goals would deliver appropriate child care to all families and children in the way that best suits their needs. They are based on the view that children’s services are aimed at meeting the needs of children and their parents while strengthening communities.

In 2000 NACBCS put forward its views about the goals that should drive Australia’s early childhood services in its submission to the federal government’s budget process.

Parents need child care to enable them to take part in the paid workforce, to care for their young children and provide a safe and developmentally nurturing environment and to support them when child rearing responsibilities are difficult. Local communities want services that help build community, break down isolation and provide a focus for developing networks and personal support systems. The nation as a whole wants and needs adults to participate in the paid workforce and needs to build a future of healthy intelligent and contributing people (Wannan 2000)

In 2005 as NACBCS convenor I was invited to speak in Canada about Australia’s experience with corporate child care. As part of that lecture tour I provided the following as the goals NACBCS saw as appropriate for a quality children’s services system in Australia (Wannan 2006):

• foster child development

• support families and create networks of support

• enable women, parents generally to participate in the paid workforce

• build community.
NACBCS has not changed its view in 30 years about the purpose of children’s services nor about what the government should be doing. Today our goals are consistent with many who are interested in the building of social capital, capacity building, strengthening community and community engagement. While the language has changed and new debates about community, safety and economic prosperity have emerged, the NACBCS view of how best to nurture Australia’s young children and develop their services has remained constant.

**Children’s services policy working for children**

It is important to stress that at the core of any national children’s policy must be the achievement of positive outcomes for children. While a children’s services policy should achieve many positive outcomes for a range of stakeholders its prime goal and responsibility must be to deliver safe, quality care and foster the positive development of young children. When this does not happen children suffer, parents are stressed and worried and thus the economy suffers in the short and long term.

The importance of delivering good outcomes for children has been heightened recently as much public attention has been given to the importance of the early years of a child’s life and the lifelong impact of experiences in this foundation period. The brain research undertaken by Canadian medical researchers, McCain and Mustard (1999) and the Americans, Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) focused attention worldwide on young children’s development. Their research showed how much development occurred in the first few years of a child’s life and provided a basis for the contention that this can be enhanced by good early years experiences and damaged by poor experiences. Further the research demonstrates that the effects are lifelong and thus of importance to society as a whole.

For many politicians and policy makers, the fact that infants experience rapid development and that this development is influenced by the environment was news! Children’s services advocates welcomed this research, not because it was any kind of revelation but because it brought in a range of new advocates for quality early years services – even if the much respected new
advocates were predominantly men in suits or white coats. This was very hard for women social activists who have struggled for years to raise the profile of children and the early years services needed for them. Today, finally, politicians are reading papers that make statements like the following:

We know now that development of the brain in the early years of life, particularly the first three years, sets the base of competency and coping skills for the later stages in life...

Brain development in the period from conception to six years sets a base for learning, behaviour and health over the life cycle… (Mustard & McCain 1999, p. 8)

As Fraser Mustard stated in an interview on the ABC’s Radio National Health Report:

... a very sensitive period of brain development is ... in the first three to six years of life, which means the early years become hugely important in terms of the overall equity in health in the population…not just physical and mental health problems later on, but also in terms of the functional literacy and mathematical skills…researchers believe that it is possible to influence the development of the brain by ensuring children do have positive experiences in the early years. There is plenty of evidence to support good early years parenting as critical for healthy child development but in the absence of this, either due to parental difficulty or parents being in the paid workforce, then the accessibility of quality child care is critical…Early intervention can improve the odds for vulnerable young children (Interview with Mustard, J Fraser and Norman Swan first broadcast on the "Health Report", ABC Radio National on 6 November 2000 is reproduced by permission of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and ABC Online).

(c) 2000 ABC. All rights reserved. A full copy of the transcript can be found at: http://www.abc.net.au/rn/healthreport/stories/2000/209195.htm
The importance of this research is that it tells us that what we do with early childhood services really does matter. This research should inform policy relating to all aspects of the delivery of early childhood services. Services which offer children poor experiences, insufficient opportunities for infants to explore, to be stimulated and to ensure that daily play experiences are turned into learnings, are unlikely to be good for children.

**Corporate child care in Australia – delivering quality?**

We do know how to make a difference in the quality of early years services. There is much research that shows that staffing is critical: the qualifications, the experience, the ratios and rate of turnover. Similarly, we know group size matters and that the relationships between staff, children and parents impact on the quality of the service. These aspects of a service ensure the delivery of relevant programs, the safety of children, the responsiveness of staff to individual children’s needs and their ability to understand children’s cultural backgrounds, family dynamics, personal problems or special needs.

Appropriately, Australia’s state and territory licensing regulations and the National Quality Assurance System are built on recognition of the importance of these aspects of children’s services. Unfortunately, while there is a requirement to deliver according to these criteria, monitoring and enforcement has failed to ensure adherence to even the most basic safety standards in services in Australia.

There is evidence that quality may be declining in the current children’s services environment. In Victoria, we now have child care operators still licensed, still open to children after very serious incidents – not one incident but several. These include; a broken arm, an infant being dehydrated, a toddler lost and wandering in the street, another found by a stranger in a lift – in all these cases the staff purported not to even know the problem had occurred. We have had reports of food budgets being cut to levels below those required for adequate nutrition. Staff are also leaving.

A staff member at one child centre gave the following response when asked why she had decided to leave:
I could not ethically and morally as an early childhood teacher, stay in an organisation that I felt was not supporting the fundamentals of children. The bottom line always came to money, not to the child and the child’s right. The professionalism of the staff was always down turned by not employing professionals because they cost too much (‘Child care companies in the spotlight’, by Emma Alberici first broadcast on the "7:30 Report", 29 March 2004 is reproduced by permission of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and ABC Online).

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The following comments were reported in the *Sunday Age* about a centre taken over by a large corporate chain:

Money became a preoccupation. The centre previously spent between $500 and $700 per week feeding children. The new owners slashed this to $350 a week, before realising it was not enough for a nutritional diet.¹

The *Sunday Age* reported that all but two of the original 30 staff left that centre.

Another recent breach of very basic hygiene standards was reported in the *Daily Telegraph* in NSW.

A giant childcare company has been prosecuted over embarrassing bungles at one of its branches, including mouse droppings on bed sheets and red back spiders in a storage area that was accessible to children. Other issues included mouse traps on nappy change tables, unlocked cupboards with dangerous cleaning and other items, no smoke detector and confidential records on public display. ... the latest of thirteen prosecutions in the past two years over matters including

¹ Birnbauer, W. & Dowling, J. *Child Care Inc.* Sunday Insight, Sunday Age, Melbourne, December 5, 2004.
inadequate staff numbers, unclean or unsafe premises and being unlicensed.

and in the same newspaper report:

Documents provided by the Department of Community Services (DOCS) show one operator – near Cessnock – has been in court twice recently on a series of breaches, among its penalties were two lots of 18-month good behaviour bonds.²

Something is amiss when incidents like these keep happening and little is done to halt the growth of the corporate child care model that appears to be linked to the loss of quality in service delivery.

Australia’s children’s service system is changing and becoming more corporatised. In the centre based long day care sector the transformation has been dramatic (see Table 6.1). The percentage of for-profit services has increased significantly, and continues to grow.

Table 6.1 Private vs community based long day care centres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>’91</th>
<th>’97</th>
<th>’02</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private for profit</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community based</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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Source: AIHW various years

The number of services owned by the for-profit sector is substantial. ABC Learning, the largest, owns approximately 25 per cent of the total Australian provision of long day care places and plans to have over 1200 centres in Australia and New Zealand by the end of the 2006/07 financial year (ASX 2006).

The goals of corporate companies do not sit well with the goals of a good children’s services policy. As Milton Friedman is quoted as saying; ‘The social responsibility of business is to maximise profit’ (Kay 2004).

² *Killer Spiders at childcare*, Daily Telegraph NSW, September 19, 2005
For the community sector the purpose is altogether different:

Social purpose businesses are those where the social goal of the organisation takes precedence over others; it is the primary motivation for the business. If the organisation does make a profit there is an expectation that the majority, if not all, will be re-invested back into the business for future expansion and development of its social goal, rather than being retained by individuals (Kendall, Montgomery, Thomson 2005).

Mark Lyons from the University of Technology, Sydney gives the following description of nonprofit organisations:

Non profit organisations not only make a significant contribution to the economy, they are also an essential component of an open and tolerant society and of a democratic political system. They are the product of the willingness of some people to work together for some common good (for themselves – mutuality; or for others – altruism). Their defining characteristics; that they are prevented from distributing profit or net assets to members, ensures this commitment to a wider goal than the enrichment of their members. It defines their behaviour as organisations, and means they behave differently to government agencies and for profit businesses (Lyons 2004).

There are very real differences between social purpose services like community owned children’s services and commercial businesses like the corporate childcare companies dominating Australia’s long day care sector today. The drivers underpinning how they provide services are very different (see Table 6.2).

The goals related to quality care for children are important. Equally important are the systems for monitoring implementation of goals. The systems for regulating and assuring that quality is achieved in Australia’s formal children’s service system seem to be failing our children. The achievement of quality outcomes for children may require a children’s services policy that precludes services whose principle purpose is generating returns for
shareholders from being funded and supported, let alone encouraged by government.

Table 6.2 Drivers for alternative systems of children’s services delivery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not for profit</th>
<th>Corporate</th>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Primary purpose to deliver child care with engagement of parents</td>
<td>▪ Primary purpose to generate profit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Reinvest surplus into the service</td>
<td>▪ Return profits to shareholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Be the benchmark for the highest standards for quality</td>
<td>▪ Minimise regulations and standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Meet best practice requirements for community engagement and participation</td>
<td>▪ Meet best practice requirements for efficiency in business operation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Retain public infrastructure for the future</td>
<td>▪ Private ownership of property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Retain and reward quality childcare workers – experienced and qualified</td>
<td>▪ Minimise inputs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Maintain best practice child/staff ratios</td>
<td>▪ Amalgamate into larger consolidated structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Inclusive of all children</td>
<td>▪ Use pricing to drive out competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Support an open spot check inspection regime</td>
<td>▪ Use commercial-in-confidence to protect market position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Integrate with other early childhood services</td>
<td>▪ Minimise cost of staffing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Be part of a universal, planned service system</td>
<td>▪ Standardise programs and provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Cater to profitable segments of the market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Restrict inspections and resist spot checks</td>
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A recent research report from the Australia Institute based on interviews with ABC Learning Centres staff found considerable concern from these staff about the quality of the services provided for children and that report concluded that:

Given the results of both the 2005 Australia Institute survey, and the interviews reported in this paper, both an ethical and a risk management perspective suggest that the federal government should consider the wisdom of further expansion of corporate chains in the long day care sector (Rush & Downie 2006).

If the federal government wishes to develop a world class children’s service system then it should adopt as the core goal the provision of high quality, appropriate care and developmental opportunities in settings that are responsive to the diverse needs of Australia’s families provided by services that are not for profit.

**Children’s services supporting women, enabling economic growth**

There is of course an additional bonus from providing children with genuine opportunities to develop to their full potential – and this is the benefit it brings to the Australian economy. Services that achieve positive developmental outcomes in young children are more likely to ensure that children progress through the education system and gain employment in adult life. This is important for Australia’s future economy. For adults of the future this is also important and can help keep them out of poverty and enable a better quality of life. This further underpins the need to make sure early childhood services are high quality.

And we do not have to wait for future benefits – children’s services are critical for the economy of today. In 2005 more than 1.5 million children (46 per cent) aged 12 years and under used some form of children’s service and one in five participated in a formally funded service (ABS 2005). Women are more likely to be the prime child carer in the family and are entering the paid workforce in large numbers while their children are young. Children’s services are fundamentally important in enabling these women to work. A children’s services policy must therefore have a goal of supporting parent participation in the paid economy.
The increase over the last couple of decades in participation in the paid labour force by women with children has been dramatic.

The increase in female workforce participation means that most women with family responsibilities are employed: the employment rate for all women increased from 47 per cent in 1980 to 62 per cent in 2001; the employment rate for women in the child rearing age range (25–54 years) in 2001 was 68 per cent (Issues in Society 2005).

The latest Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows the growing trend for women with young children to be in the paid workforce:

- 51.3 per cent of Australian mothers of children aged two years are in the workforce, with this rising to 70 per cent for mothers of three year olds (ABS 2004)

- Between 1983 and 2002, the proportion of families with dependent children who have two parents employed increased from 39.7 to 56.9 per cent (West & Gray, 2004).

As the renowned Canadian early childhood researcher Fraser Mustard puts it:

You are going to have women in the labour force, and that's important for society, you’re going to have women with young children. You’re going to have two parents working who are dependent on other care givers when they’re working and they’re going to come home tired and fatigued. … Then it becomes extremely important to design new systems for support for this social change (Mustard 2000).

Australia’s economic future requires policy makers to focus on the provision of children’s services. In the highly competitive global economy an industrial nation like Australia will be competing for a skilled workforce as ageing impacts on the population structure. Pru Goward, the Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner, sees the issue of competing globally for employees as directly related to support for family responsibilities.
[In] the current global job market…high calibre workers with skills in demand can work abroad in just about any country. Last year, Australia’s brain drain saw 40,000 lawyers, scientists, accountants and other professionals leave Australia’s shores to take up positions in other countries where the remuneration and working conditions far surpassed those in Australia…The challenge for Australia’s future is to make it possible for women and all employees to be able to balance work and family commitments (Goward 2003).

Clearly children’s services are essential to the workforce participation of parents and in particular women. A good childcare policy will thus have as a goal facilitation of participation in the paid workforce by parents.

**Balancing interests**

What does such a goal mean for policy development? Will children’s services then be required to respond to work demands or should work demands fit in with what makes children’s services responsive to children’s needs?

The balance between the needs of industry, of workers and of children is an emerging challenge. How does a children’s service remain responsive to children whose parents may work very long hours, including through the night? Should industry be supported so that employees can work long hours, casual hours, irregular hours or days of employment? Or should workers with family responsibilities be protected from such working arrangements in the interests of their children?

One solution to this problem is to develop other government policy responses that impact on work life balance. Paid parental leave is one response. Another is to provide parental benefits that reduce the need for paid work for parents. These are popular responses and can be viewed as part of a continuum of support to parents with young children. But even if we win a comprehensive range of such supports, children’s services will still be needed – these alternative family balance responses will only complement the role of children’s services. Such complementary responses are likely to be short term and unlikely ever to be funded to a level that would
compensate for loss of paid employment. For a range of reasons women will continue to choose to work outside the home before their children reach school age.

Centre based children’s services are currently not funded adequately to operate for long hours, into the evenings or overnight. Setting aside the debate of whether this would be good for children anyway, parents needing after hours care must use Family Day Care, the home based service where one adult alone provides care for up to five children. Currently this service type has difficulty recruiting carers, possibly because of low pay or poor conditions.

**Fostering children’s development and building community**

NACBCS also sees the development of strong communities as a key goal of a children’s services policy. Children and their parents need to be surrounded by networks that enable them to be part of a supportive community. This can vary; workplaces, schools, neighbourhoods and cultural communities can all provide a relevant focus for family support. NACBCS sees these communities as critical to reducing the risk of abuse and neglect, family violence, and crime more broadly. Community based children’s services that are managed by the local community, by their very nature create such support networks in local neighbourhoods through active engagement of families. There is strong evidence that community services such as community owned children’s services contribute to the building of social capital and thus stronger communities.

Real community engagement, empowerment and ownership that facilitates the building of ‘community’, the breaking down of isolation and creates networks between local people and groups is the core business of community based not-for-profit services. This process is now often referred to as building social capital. The importance of social capital is widely recognised as contributing to the development of trust and community participation that is linked to long-term positive health outcomes, happiness and improved mental health, public safety and reduction of crime and vandalism. Short term the linking of local people enables reciprocal support
networks to develop and enhances perception of safety in the local area (Klein 2004).

Participation, empowerment, access and sustainability are seen as leading to greater fairness, sustainability and trust. For communities today these are essential outcomes delivered by strong social capital.

A number of studies have demonstrated the benefits derived from social capital. Robert Putnam, the American political scientist and a key writer on social capital with his books *Making Democracy Work* (1993) and *Bowling Alone* (2000) lists the benefits arising from the creation of social capital as relating to:

- pluralist democracy
- physical health
- happiness and mental health
- public safety, vandalism and crime
- economic performance and efficiency.

A recent literature review undertaken by the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services looking at communities, social capital and public policy provides the following findings.

- Recent cross-national studies in the USA have confirmed that social capital (defined as trust and voluntary participation in community activities) is causally related to democratic participation

- People with rich social networks appear to suffer less illness and live longer than people with poor networks and joining a community group reduces your risk of dying in the next year by about the same amount as giving up smoking. People with rich social networks are less likely to catch colds. The benefits to children’s health are also clear – social capital is the second best predictor of low birth rate and of child morbidity and mortality

- Overall the evidence on the beneficial effects of social capital for public safety is quite convincing, and has in fact
convincing policy makers, police and other influential people in a number of places in Australia, the UK and the USA

- There is little doubt that individuals with high levels of social capital and rich networks benefit economically. Trust and good networks plainly reduce the transaction costs of doing business

- Cross-country comparisons also support the contention that social capital has a positive association with economic growth. Knack and Keefer found a significant association between trust and civic norms and economic growth among 29 market economies (Knack & Keefer 1997 cited in Johnson, Headey & Jensen 2005).

Commercial corporations cannot achieve this community building; their services do not belong to the community, do not engage with the community as active partners in decision making and are accountable to an external board, distant and uninterested in the local community. A good national children’s services policy will have as key goals the strengthening of family networks and building community.

**Achieving a sustainable high quality children’s services system that’s good for children**

To summarise, the most important goal for a national children’s services policy must be to achieve a nationwide network of sustainable, quality community owned, not-for-profit early years children’s centres. Only then will we have a system of services focused on meeting the needs of all stakeholders:

- Children’s need to develop, learn and enjoy their childhood

- Parent’s need to work, raise their children and contribute to their community life

- The community’s need for a strong, inclusive social fabric with adults, children and community groups well connected and supported
- Australia’s need for a strong, vibrant economy in which everyone has the opportunity to live well and to participate.

NACBCS wants all of this; we have the answers to translate good goals into practice and we are more than happy to share these with everyone – especially governments.

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