

October 2024

## Restacking the Odds welcomes focus on quality and reach in Productivity Commission report, highlighting need for data as critical ingredient.

The Productivity Commission's landmark report calls for children to have universal access to early childhood education and care. [Restacking the Odds](#) welcomes the Commission's focus on quality and reach, so children no longer miss out on the benefits of our Early Childhood Education and Care.

*"Right now, we have an equity issue in early childhood development. A child living in a low-income area shows three times the levels of developmental vulnerability on Australia's Early Childhood Development census compared to a child in a high-income area. We need a fairer early childhood education and care system that can start to address these developmental inequities from when children are very young and we can make a difference"* said Professor Sharon Goldfeld, Director of the Centre for Community Child Health at MCRI.

Olivia Hilton, General Manager of Restacking the Odds highlighted the need for better measurement to deliver truly universal early childhood education and care that meets children's needs. *"While there's no silver bullet to solving entrenched disadvantage, early childhood education and care can meaningfully change the course of children's lives - provided it's good quality and children can access it in the right amount. To make sure these reforms work for children who need them most, we need ways to monitor what's happening on the ground and regularly keep priority cohorts front of mind."*

The Commission's report shines a light on three fundamental pillars – quantity, quality and participation – that ensure early childhood development services are leading to more equitable outcomes for all kids. Restacking the Odds has defined a measurement framework for these pillars:

- A universal system means having **enough** ECEC places for every child to access. The PC recommends changes to workforce pay and attraction and to service providers to alleviate challenges of operating services in smaller communities or more challenging contexts.
- We can do more to make sure every child can access **high-quality** ECEC. The National Quality Framework provides a strong starting point. We know service providers are passionate about continuous quality improvement and we welcome the recommendations on paid time, and investment in infrastructure and capability to support front line workers deliver the best possible environment for kids.

- Children who stand to benefit most from formal, play-based education are also the most likely to be missing out. The recommendations on affordability, access and inclusion are a great starting point to boost **participation** and ensure all children are learning and developing.

The report calls for a new ECEC Commission from 2026 to oversee the reforms and new system and highlighted the need for better data to help them in their stewarding role. We support this recommendation and we call on the government to take immediate action to get the right data into the hands of frontline practitioners to support service improvement. Australia's early years systems will not reliably improve children's outcomes until those involved in designing and delivering fundamental services can utilise local, frontline data.

The importance of getting timely, usable data to frontline service providers, who can act more quickly to make change, was missing from the recommendations.

*"We have seen firsthand that when service providers are supported with timely lead indicator data on quantity, quality and participation, together with the capabilities to use it, real change can happen fast. We know that when service providers are equipped with the right information, they are innovative, motivated and more likely to partner with other services – this is incredibly powerful in ensuring children are getting the most from their early learning"* said Olivia Hilton.

**We call on the Government to adopt a consistent system-wide timely data framework and investments in building capabilities and infrastructure. This will ensure service providers and governments are equipped to see and act on ECEC quality, quantity and participation, especially for children who are facing disadvantage.**

Restacking the Odds is a joint collaboration between the Centre for Community Child Health, Social Ventures Australia and Bain & Company, with support from the Paul Ramsay Foundation.