The Politics of Prevention and Early (Years) Intervention:

*Why is acting early so hard?*

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Twitter: @AnneHollonds
“Head Start” “Sure Start” “Better Start” “Early Start” “Equal Start” “Good Start”

.........Where to start?
“prevention is about preventing a problem before it occurs

early intervention is about responding to the first signs of a problem”
1. Where to start? The politics and the policies

2. Integration – contradictions and opportunities

3. Building a system with children at the centre.
What Hockey is going on about...

Source: 2010 Intergenerational report
2012-13

• $3.2b on child protection

• $664m on prevention or early intervention

• 7.5% pa increase in child protection costs since 2007

The Forrest Review 2014
Productivity Commission Report on Childcare and Early Learning
Seismic, not incremental, change is required and the time for action is now. These solutions are not expensive and parity is completely achievable with the strength of will from each of us.

Andrew Forrest
Child and Parent Centres on Public School Sites in Low Socioeconomic Communities in Western Australia: A Model of Integrated Service Delivery

Literature Review

Centre for Research in Early Childhood
Lynn Whiteside
Caroline Barratt-Pugh
Lennie Barblett
Elizabeth Stamopoulos
Marianne Knaus

Social Justice Research Centre
Anna Targowska
Susan Teather
Acting Early, Changing Lives:
How prevention and early action saves money and improves wellbeing.

www.benevolent.org.au
The value of investment in the early years: Balancing costs of childhood services

Early Childhood Series No. 4. 2011
Measuring what matters: A guide for children’s centres

Jill Roberts and Angela Donkin, with Demetris Pillas

UCL Institute of Health Equity
An Equal Start: Improving outcomes in Children’s Centres

The Evidence Review
A Pathway from Early Childhood Disadvantage for Australian Children

The Experience of the Western Australian Challis School–Community Model of Ensuring Children Growing up with Disadvantage are not Left Behind

Prepared by the Telethon Kids Institute for Minderoo Foundation
Time to Act
Investing in our children and our future

For every dollar you spend on my development, I’ll repay you seven dollars a year when I grow up.

minderoo

A Minderoo Foundation position paper October 2014
Early Intervention: Smart Investment, Massive Savings

The Second Independent Report to Her Majesty’s Government
Graham Allen MP

3 Year old children

- Normal
- Extreme neglect

Costs to taxpayer

- Early intervention
- Low attainment
- Benefits
- Failed relationships
- Poor parenting
- Teen pregnancy
- Violent crime
- Drink & drug abuse
- Shorter life
- Poor mental health

July 2011

HM Government
‘Sensitive periods’ in early brain development

- Binocular vision
- Central auditory system
- Habitual ways of responding
- Language
- Emotional control
- Symbol
- Peer social skills
- Relative quantity
Source: Heckman (2008)
The evidence: what we know about place-based approaches to support children’s wellbeing

Collaborate for children: scoping project

Produced by the Centre for Community Child Health
Funded by the Australian Government Department of Education

November 2014
2. Integration – contradictions and opportunities
Feeding Families at Forbes Children’s Centre SA
Figure 4: A child-centred approach for social system support of the Five by Five. Adapted from the UCL Institute of Health Equity report “An Equal Start: improving outcomes in Children’s Centres”. BetterStart 2014.
School Readiness

Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)

• Physical health and wellbeing
• Social competence
• Emotional maturity
• Language and cognitive skills
• Communication skills and general knowledge

2012: 22% vulnerable in one or more domains / Indigenous children 43%
Telethon Kids Institute 2015
Indigenous Affairs priorities of the Australian Government:

- *Getting children to school*
- *Getting adults to work*
- *Building safer Indigenous communities*
Multi-generational approach
THE BEST START AT HOME

WHAT WORKS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF PARENT-CHILD INTERACTIONS FROM CONCEPTION TO AGE 5 YEARS? A RAPID REVIEW OF INTERVENTIONS
“A focus on supporting parents reinforces ..... that early intervention and prevention is about empowering parents, not State interference in family life”.

UK Early Intervention Foundation 2015
3 Domains of Parental Wellbeing

Executive function
Mental health
Economic security

Shonkoff and Fisher 2013
Infant mortality 2013
1.8 per 1000 births

Infant mortality in Finland 1950-2012
Baby Basket: Cape York 2014

$874 per person
Finland’s Maternity Package 2014
3. Building a system with children at the centre
“Improving children’s later life outcomes”

UCL Institute of Health Equity 2013
Early child health and development is a key determinant of health, wellbeing and learning across the life course.

**Children’s health and development**

- Physical health and development
  - Cognitive development
  - Communication and language development
  - Social and emotional development

- Protective maternal pre- and neonatal behaviours
  - Breastfeeding
  - Smoking cessation

- Stimulating home learning environment
  - Secure attachment
  - Resources available (books, toys)
  - Shared reading and conversation
  - Positive, responsive parenting

**The most important drivers of good later life outcomes for children**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good economic resources</th>
<th>Good social resources</th>
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<tr>
<td>Accessing good employment</td>
<td>Maternal literacy and numeracy skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient income and living conditions</td>
<td>Positive maternal physical and mental health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Networks of support</td>
<td>Parenting knowledge and self-efficacy</td>
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**Sets the conditions for...**
System Elements

- National Outcomes Framework
- Integrated evidence-informed policy
- Inter-professional practice and progressive universalism platforms
- Enablers: Implementation support, outcomes measurement, data linkage
- Evidence-informed interventions: children, parents, family relationships.
We need.....

• Longer term planning – 10 and 20 year plans

• Investment in prevention and early years intervention

• Transition plans from late reaction expenditure to investment much earlier
Support for Investment in Early Action

Q1. Overall, how important do you feel it is for Governments to invest more in acting early to support families with young children as a way to help prevent problems and save money in the long term?
Base: All respondents (n=1000)
The Benevolent Society 2013

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The enduring legacy of the Early Years

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<th>Early Experiences &amp; Some of Their Lifelong Consequences</th>
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<td><strong>Sustained Poverty</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Abuse &amp; Neglect</strong></td>
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<td>More health problems; poor academic achievement, not graduating on time</td>
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BetterStart 5x5

5 dimensions of healthy development:
1. Physical
2. Language
3. Attachment
4. Social emotional
5. Cognitive

5 stages of healthy development:
1. Pregnancy
2. Post-natal
3. Infancy
4. Toddlerhood
5. Early childhood
Benefits of prevention and early intervention

- Improved educational achievement
- Improved material circumstances
- Improved employment outcomes
- Improved mental & overall health
- Improved parenting outcomes
- Reduced criminality
- Reduction in child abuse and neglect
1 in 7 Australian children (4–17 years) is affected by a behavioural or emotional problem

More than 1 in 2 Australian children with mental health issues who need professional help don’t receive it

1 in 5 Australian children start school behind — poorly equipped to benefit from social and learning opportunities

Australia has the 4th highest proportion of children (5–14 years) living in jobless families (among OECD countries)
The enduring legacy of the Early Years

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Figure 2: Cumulative economic benefits of early education programs

Source: Lee et al. (2012)
Perinatal deaths 1975–2012
Source: THL, Nordic perinatal statistics
Maternal mortality
1. Where to start? The politics and the policies

*What do we know?*

*What do we have?*

*What can we do with what we have?*