

Early Childhood Development Council Canberra, Tuesday 29 November 2022

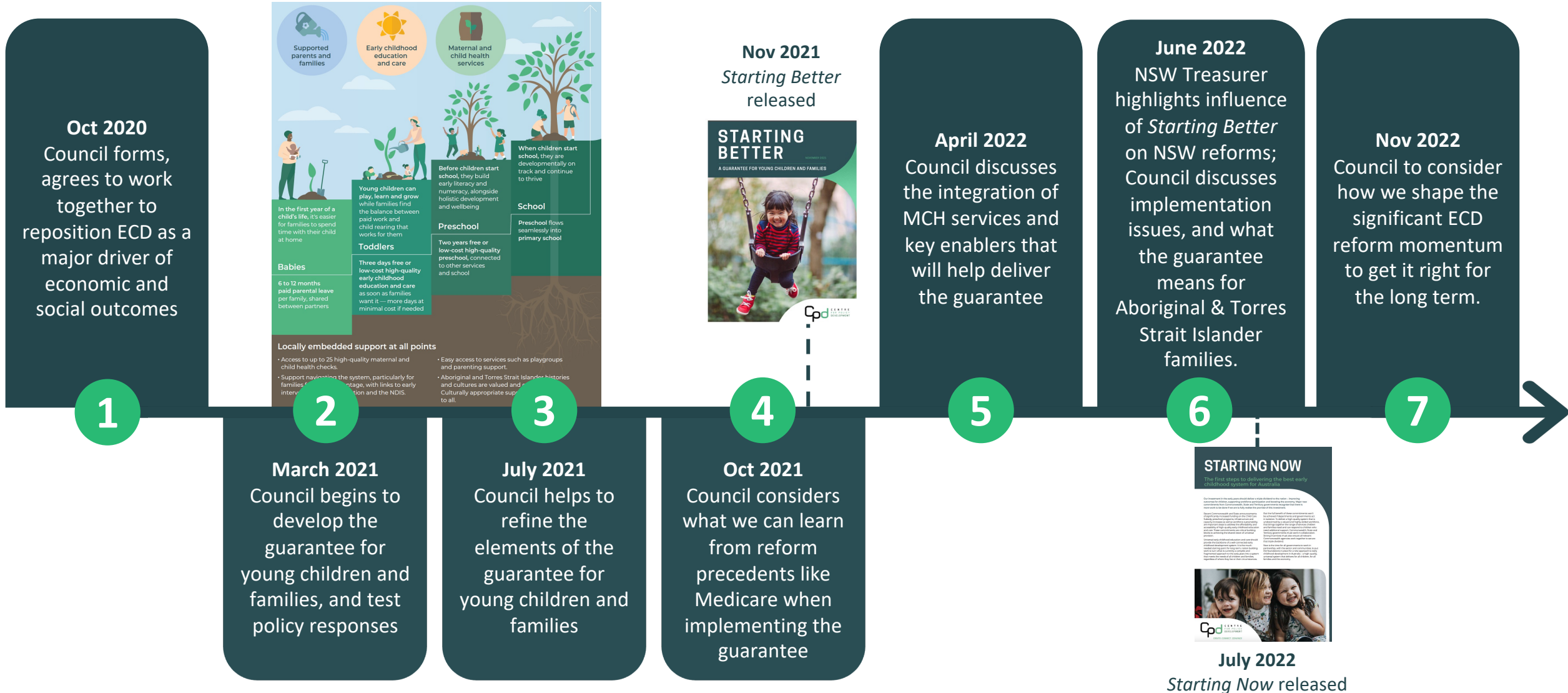
Agenda and pre-reading pack



**Item 1: Progress over the last two years of the
ECD Initiative**

The ECD Council has made significant progress in just two years

When we first brought the ECD Council together in October 2020, we described its purpose as a forum for open dialogue between policymakers, sector leaders and other experts on the challenges confronting the sector, and a space to gain learning and insight that leads to action. Two years on, the momentum for early childhood reform has never been greater.



A year on from the release of *Starting Better*, collective progress is significant

	12-month milestone in <i>Starting Better</i>	Major related commitments in the last 12 months
Paid parental leave	Families receive 26 weeks paid leave, with some portion allocated to each parent to encourage equal sharing. Sole parents receive the full 26 weeks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Commonwealth has committed to increasing PPL to 26 weeks by July 2026. ○ Distinction between ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ carer for PPL will be removed. ○ Women’s Economic Equality Taskforce examining the best way to allocate ‘use it or lose it’ provisions.
Maternal and child health	Vulnerable families are supported by healthcare professionals to access up to 25 MCH checks as needed, with additional checks delivered through nurse home visits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ACT’s Best Start: First 1000 Days strategy commits to new allied health staff to support parents and improved multidisciplinary infant and child mental health care. ○ NSW’s Brighter Beginnings funding will increase the number of nurse home visits through the Sustaining NSW Families program. ○ SA has committed to two new child health checks at 12 months and 3 years.
ECEC services	National commitment to a new funding model integrating ECEC and preschool. Vulnerable children are entitled to three free or low-cost days of high quality ECEC a week – more if they need it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ National Cabinet has agreed to develop a long-term vision for early childhood. ○ Significant increase in Commonwealth investment in the Child Care Subsidy. ○ NSW’s 10-year Childcare and Economic Opportunity Fund to boost access to, and affordability of, early childhood education and care services. ○ Victoria’s Free Kinder for both 3 and 4-year-old preschool programs from 2023. ○ New QLD funding provides free or low-cost kindy to families based on level of disadvantage. ○ VIC and NSW joint commitment to ‘pre prep/kindergarten’ for every child by 2030.
Preschool	National commitment to two years of preschool in the years before school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SA’s Royal Commission into ECEC will examine how to expand preschool provision to 3-year-olds.
Early years of primary school	Trial options to strengthen the role of schools in the transition from early learning to school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ACT’s Best Start strategy includes commitment to investigate enrolment from birth in local schools to ensure service providers work together.
Wraparound services & supports	Trial options to integrate navigator support within ECD systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ NSW committed to integrating development checks onsite at preschool ○ Increased funding for new TAS Child and Family Learning Centres, including additional staffing and integration of 3-year-old preschool programs

Item 2: Reform processes currently underway

In addition to specific State and Territory initiatives, there are many ECD-related reform processes underway

National reform processes

- **Early Years Strategy**, including the National Early Years Summit (17 Feb 2023)
- Commonwealth and S/T 'sprint' work to fulfill **National Cabinet's** request for Ministers to develop a long-term vision for early childhood
- **Closing the Gap Policy Partnership** on Early Childhood Care and Development (co-chaired by SNAICC and Cth DoE)
- Women's Economic Equality **Taskforce**
- Employment **White Paper**
- Measuring What Matters **wellbeing budget statement** and consultation
- Jobs and Skills Summit outcomes, including **Early Years Investment Dialogue**

Reviews and inquiries

- South Australia's **Royal Commission** into early childhood education and care
- **ACCC** pricing inquiry
- **Productivity Commission** review into universal ECEC
- **Cth Parliamentary committee** inquiries:
 - Cost of Living (report by Nov 2023)
 - Work and Care (report by Feb 2023)
 - Workforce Australia Employment Services (full report by Sept 2023)
- Western Australia's **Select Committee** Inquiry into Child Development Services

Preschool Reform Agreement

- Work related to the Preschool Reform Agreement, including:
 - Establishing new **preschool attendance** targets
 - Developing a **preschool outcomes** measure, along with the Expert Advisory Group
 - Improving the quality and transparency of **national preschool data**
 - Developing a new Preschool **Performance Framework**

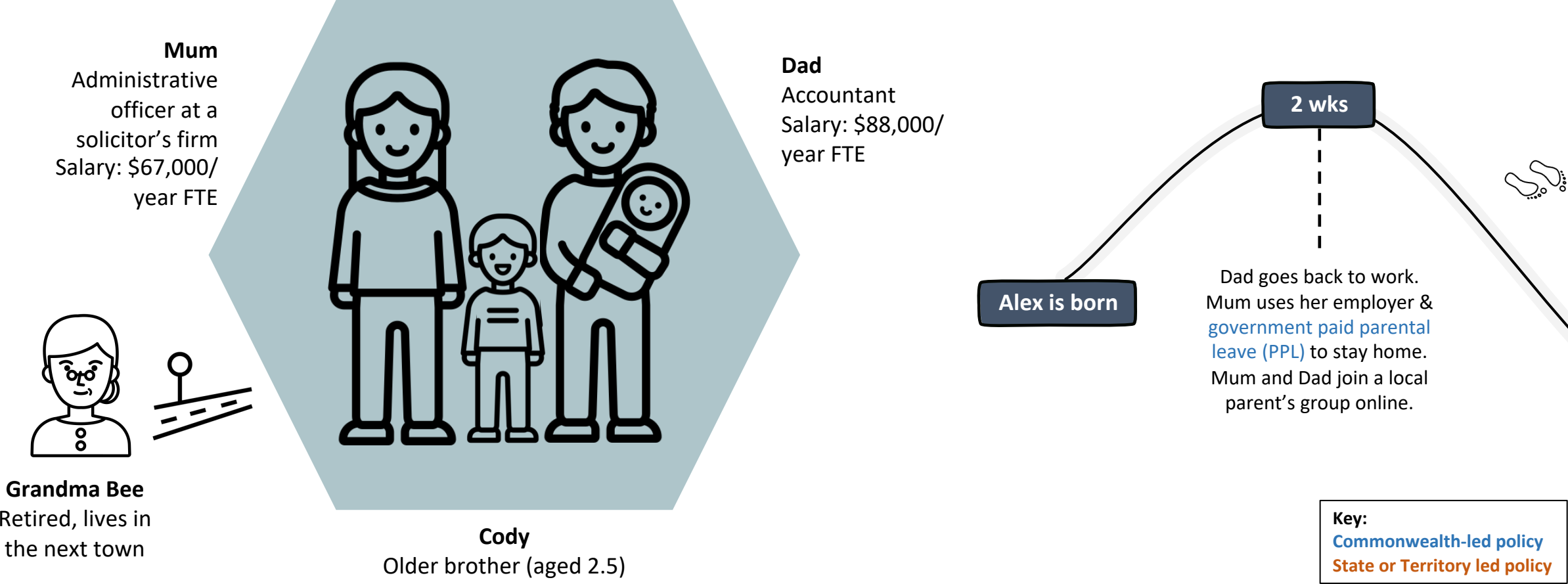
How do we ensure all this effort is **pulling in the same direction**? How can these pieces build on each other so they're **more than the sum of their parts**?
How can this work best support **implementation of the guarantee**?

Item 3: Family journey maps

The following journey maps are illustrative examples of how two different families move through the ECD system. They are not intended to be definitive but to serve as a conversation prompt. They highlight that while each service system delivers on its specific objectives, it's generally up to families to navigate their way through and between these systems and, as a result, those who are already advantaged are most likely to fare best.

Journey Map – Alex Kingston

The Kingstons are a middle-income family living in an inner regional area in NSW classified as a 'childcare desert'. Mum and Dad have a son, Cody, and they have just had their second child, Alex. This story follows Alex from birth into primary school.



Based on the town of Avoca, in the southern highlands of NSW. Median gross weekly family income is \$1,531, and 93.9% of the region (Robertson-Fitzroy Falls) is considered a childcare desert. Salaries are based on median gross weekly earnings for a general clerk and for an accountant. The family's FTE gross household income is around \$2,900, putting them in the 2nd most advantaged SEIFA IRSAD quintile in NSW (Table 6.4)

Journey Map – Alex Kingston

Key:
 Commonwealth-led policy
 State or Territory led policy

Mum is screened for postnatal depression at a **maternal & child health (MCH) check**. The nurse recommends she seeks a referral from a **GP** as the **psychologist at the public hospital** recently left. It takes 3 weeks to see a GP. Three **psychologist appointments are covered by Medicare**, but there is a 4 month wait and the service is an hour away.

8 wks

7 mths

Dad uses his employer PPL to drop down to part-time work. Dad works 3 days/week, Mum goes back to work 2 days/week. She is struggling with her mental health being back at work. The **MCH** service never follows up on treatment for her postnatal depression.



13 mths

Dad's employer PPL has run out, so Grandma Bee steps in to look after the children when Mum is at work. Both children are on **LDC** wait lists.

Cody gets a spot at the local **LDC** for 3 days/week but there are no places for Alex.

15 mths

18 mths

Through a parent's group connection Alex finds a 3 day/week place at a different **LDC**, but 1 of the days doesn't overlap with Cody. Grandma Bee continues to help out.



2 yrs

Alex's favourite educator leaves and she stops wanting to attend **LDC**. Mum is frustrated and her wellbeing declines. The **LDC** Centre Director suggests she contact **Parent Line**, but Mum doesn't call. The Centre Director connects her to a local non-govt. org. that provides free, in-person psychology services in the area, which she starts attending.



3 yrs

Cody starts **school**. The Kingstons didn't realise there was a **2nd child discount**, and their fees are almost the same as last year. Mum's wellbeing has improved, so she moves to 4 days/week at work.

NSW child health check at 8 wks. Psychologist sessions covered through Medicare as 'Pregnancy Support Counselling'. The most common length of employer PPL is 7-12 wks. Parent Line is a free telephone counselling service for parents. ECEC costs estimated using Centrelink's Payment & Service Finder, with an \$11/hr fee. Non-govt. organisation providing free psychology services based on Community Links' You in Mind program.

Journey Map – Alex Kingston



3.5 yrs

Alex's LDC has raised some concerns about behavioural and attention issues. Soon afterwards, Grandma Bee falls ill and can't look after Alex anymore. Mum can't negotiate going back to working 3 days even though that's what she thinks is best for Alex. Alex instead goes to LDC 4 days/week.

4 yrs

The teacher at Alex's LDC leaves to work at the local community preschool. The LDC struggles to fill the position and obtains a staffing waiver. The Kingstons manage to secure a place for 1 day/week at the preschool, and Alex goes back to 3 days at the LDC.

Alex gets a free vision screening at her LDC through the StEPS program. The screening picks up a potential issue and she is referred to the local Child and Family Health Service for diagnosis. There is a 2 month wait list. The Kingstons decide to take her to the local optometrist instead and pay any gap fees out of pocket. The optometrist confirms that Alex needs glasses.

4.5 yrs

5 yrs

Alex starts school, Mum returns to work full-time. Cody and Alex only get an OSHC place for 2 days/week, and the family relies on a patchwork of informal care to cover the other days.

5.2 yrs

Alex's Kindergarten teacher is worried that Alex seems quite disengaged. She re-reads Alex's Transition to School Statement and realises she missed the reference to Alex's vision impairment. Alex hasn't been wearing her glasses in class, so the teacher calls Mum who speaks to Alex about it. It helps Alex get back on track.

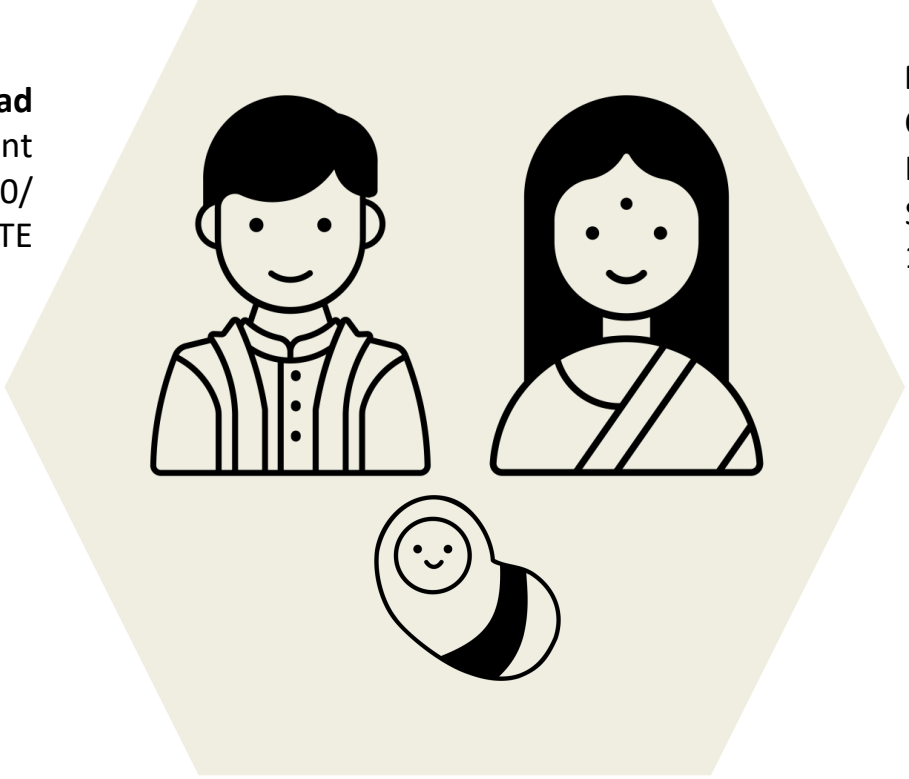


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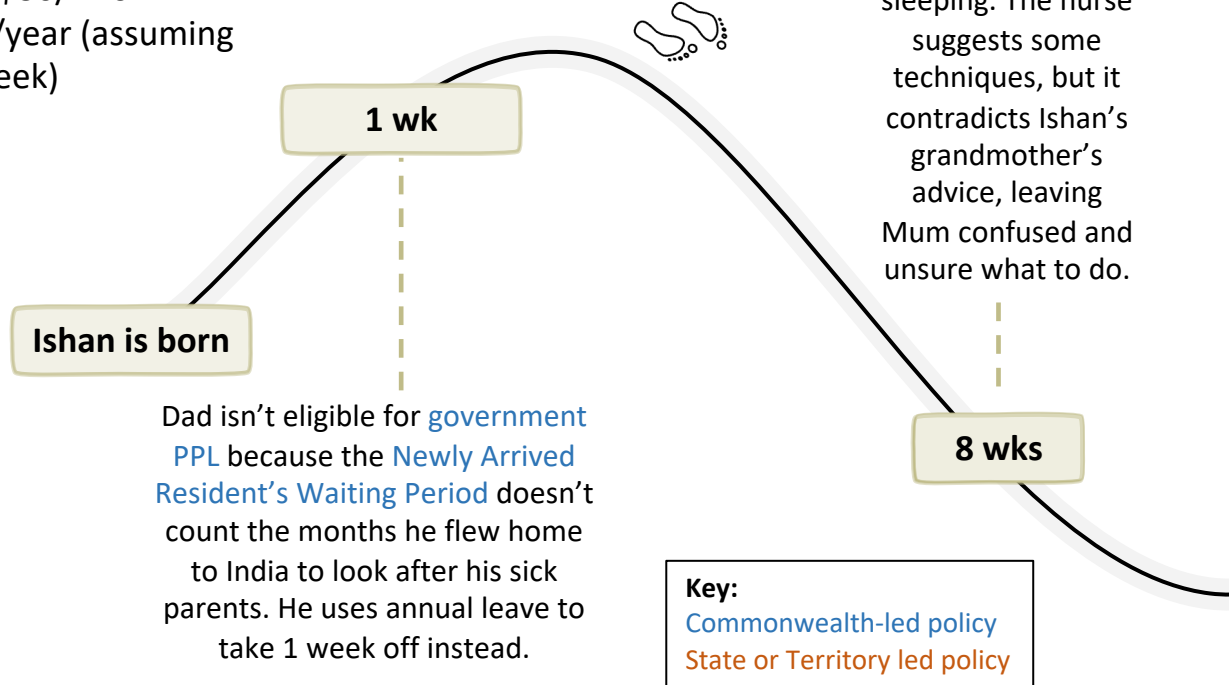
Journey Map – Ishan Mehta

The Mehtas are a lower-income family renting in a suburb in Adelaide with a high South Asian population. They became permanent residents in early 2020 after migrating from India on a temporary visa. They speak Gujarati at home but are moderately fluent in English. They have just had their first son, Ishan.

Dad
Sales assistant
Salary: \$49,000/
year FTE



Mum
Casual aged care worker
Income: \$30/hr or
\$25,000/year (assuming
16hrs/week)



Based on the suburb of Greenacres, SA, about 9km from Adelaide's CBD. Median gross weekly family income is \$1,216, and around 17% of the population is born in India. The region is not considered a childcare desert. Salary based on median gross weekly earnings for a Sales Assistant and avg hourly rate for an Aged Care Worker. The family's mean household income is \$1,100/week, putting them in the 2nd most disadvantaged SEIFA IRSAD quintile (Table 6.4). Centrelink's newly arrived resident's waiting period stipulates a 2 year wait before being eligible for Dad and Partner Pay. SA MCH check recommended at 8 wks.

Journey Map – Ishan Mehta



Mum's **government PPL** runs out. The local **FDC** run by a Gujarati family doesn't have any places, so Mum stops taking casual shifts to look after Ishan full-time.

Mum doesn't want to see the same **MCH** nurse so books to see a local bulk-billing **GP** for Ishan's next check. The wait time is long, and the GP is welcoming but the appointment is rushed.

18 wks

36 wks

12 mths

An old colleague helps Mum apply for **Family Tax Benefit (FTB) A & B**. The family don't realise Mum is also eligible to apply for the **Parenting Payment**.

18 mths

Ishan unknowingly falls behind on his immunisations. **Centrelink** sends a reminder letter but it goes to an old address.

Centrelink reduces the Mehta's FTB payments because Ishan's immunisations aren't up to date. They are told they owe debt to **Centrelink**. They are scared they got Dad's residency requirements wrong & use their savings to pay the debt in full immediately. They cancel their future FTB payments.

30 mths



2 yrs

Mum finds a free, local facilitated **playgroup program** where another Gujarati family also attends. She takes Ishan 1 day/week. They help him catch up on immunisations and tell Mum about other **ECEC options**. Mum starts to feel more confident about navigating the system.

Key:
Commonwealth-led policy
State or Territory led policy

After English, Gujarati is the most common language spoken at home for residents in Greenacres. SA Department of Education 'Learning Together Communities' hub in Central Adelaide offers free facilitated playgroup.

Journey Map – Ishan Mehta

Key:
Commonwealth-led policy
State or Territory led policy

An **educator** thinks Ishan may have early signs of autism but isn't confident his communication struggles aren't instead due to the language barrier. The educator tell her colleagues, but soon leaves the service. Higher than usual staff turnover means it is not raised with the family.

3 yrs

The Mehta's rent increases and strains the family budget. Mum wants to start Ishan at **LDC** so she can go back to work. Dad is worried about applying for **CCS** given their previous FTB experience. A **playgroup** volunteer visits their home and talks them through the CCS.

3.3 yrs

The **Activity Test** restricts Ishan to 1 day/week at LDC because Mum isn't currently working. She finds some occasional casual shifts but only works 6-8 hrs/fortnight, not enough to change Ishan's CCS entitlement.



3.6 yrs

Ishan starts **preschool** at the local **public school**. The Mehtas thought it was free but are asked to pay a \$300 voluntary parent contribution for the year. They are too embarrassed to say they can't afford it.

4 yrs

Ishan's **preschool teacher** picks up on some of the same early signs of autism. She encourages the Mehtas to see a paediatrician but the wait list for a **public specialist** is 12+ months. Dad thinks it's just a language barrier but Mum puts Ishan on the waiting list anyway.

4.5 yrs



5 yrs

The transition to the **school** environment overwhelms Ishan. The school has **support workers** to help other students with autism but Ishan can't access this help without a formal diagnosis. Ishan falls even further behind his peers as he waits to see the **public paediatrician**.



Govt preschool in SA is free, but some preschools ask parents for a [voluntary contribution levy](#).

Item 4: International examples of different ECEC system features

This section draws out some of CPD's research into ECEC systems in other countries. It provides examples of countries that have a legal entitlement to ECEC, and that have different approaches to working across multiple levels of government.

These examples are provided to inform thinking and discussion about how we can set up ECEC as a strong backbone for a broader ECD system.

A legal entitlement to ECEC: some international perspectives

This table provides a high-level overview of ECEC settings and responsibilities across several OECD countries, including where a legal entitlement to ECEC is in place.

These countries all have diverse approaches to government responsibilities and service delivery settings.

In addition to their legal entitlement, New Zealand also has a **Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy**. The strategy has a holistic vision, covering several ECD areas including parental leave, family violence, child protection, labour force outcomes, welfare, maternal and child health, discrimination, and ECEC. Its associated Programme of Action cuts across 20 different government agencies.

	Major service settings	Legal entitlement to a place in ECEC	Main government responsible for ECEC	
Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Long day care (birth to 5) ✓ Preschool (1-2 years, age 3-5). Integrated with long day care in some states (e.g. NSW), on school sites in others (e.g. WA) 	None		Commonwealth responsible for "child care", states and territories responsible for preschool
Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Long day care (birth to school age) ✓ Preschool (age 3 to 5) or pre-primary education in the year before school. Varies between provinces. 	None		Provinces and territories responsible for ECEC. New Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework sees Federal Government take a greater role in ECEC.
Norway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Preschool (Barnehager): half day and full day services (birth to 5) 	From age 1		National framework and curriculum, municipalities play a major role in ECEC governance, and funding. They own almost half of ECEC services.
Netherlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Private long day care (birth to 4) ✓ Pre-primary school (from 4): located on school sites 	From age 4		Responsibility for early childhood services shared among several national departments.
New Zealand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ System split between "teacher-led" and "parent-led services" ✓ Teacher-led includes long day care (birth to 5) and preschool (2 to 5) ✓ Kōhanga reo: children are immersed in Maori language and culture 	From age 3 (part time)		Responsibility for early childhood services shared among several national departments.
Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Long day care ("Krippe") (birth to 2) ✓ Preschool (Kindergarten) (3 to 6) ✓ Mixed-age ECEC centres (birth to 6) 	From age 1		States primarily responsible for ECEC. Federal government provides entitlement to ECEC and the overarching objectives of ECEC. Bilateral agreements between states and national government to improve ECEC quality.
Denmark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Majority of services are age-integrated to encourage continuity of care (birth to 6) 	From 6 months old		National government responsible for regulation and overall ECEC budget, municipal governments responsible for administration, service delivery and allocation of resources.

In addition to legal entitlements, some countries explicitly outline the fundamental, overarching objectives of ECEC in national legislation

For example:



Norway

The Kindergarten Act (Barnehageloven): *“the children’s need for care and play, and promote learning and formation as a basis for an all-round development... The children shall be able to develop their creative zest, sense of wonder and need to investigate. They shall learn to take care of themselves, each other and nature... The Kindergarten shall promote democracy and equality and counteract all forms of discrimination.”*



Denmark

The Daycare Services Act (dagtilbudsloven):

- Promote children and young people’s wellbeing, development and learning through ECEC services
- Give the family flexibility and options for different types of offers and subsidies, so that the family can, as far as possible, organise family and working life according to their needs and wishes
- Prevent negative social inheritance and exclusion
- Create coherence and continuity between services, with age-appropriate transitions



Germany

The Child and Youth Welfare Act (Kinder-und Jugendhilfegesetz section 22 subsection 2 SGB VIII):

- Support children in becoming independent and socially integrated personalities
- Support and complement education and care in the family
- Assist parents in better combining childcare and employment responsibilities

While Australia doesn’t set out overarching ECEC objectives in legislation, they are present in different forms in other key national documents such as:

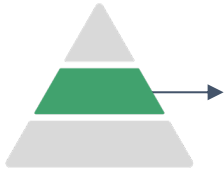
- Preschool Reform Agreement
- Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration
- Early Years Learning Framework
- COAG’s 2018 Early Learning Reform Principles

Case studies

The following slides outline case studies from **Germany, Canada** and **Norway** to highlight the different ways multiple levels of government work together in ECEC, and as a prompt for thinking about the role of different forms of **intergovernmental partnerships**.



Germany: Improving quality through Federal-State partnerships



Germany is a federation. Its 16 states hold primary responsibility for ECEC, including curriculum development, financing, regulation and monitoring. The federal government sets out the overarching objectives of ECEC and a legal entitlement to ECEC from age one. Over time, the federal government has taken a larger role in stewarding the accessibility, quality and affordability of ECEC. The National Law on Quality Development (2018) is a major milestone for national and state governments working together to improve outcomes for children.

The National Law on Quality Development (“Gute-KiTa-Gesetz”)

- A national investment of 5.5 billion euros over four years (2019-2022) to improve the quality of ECEC.
- The law recognises that states have different ECEC systems, populations, strengths and needs. The federal government, states, municipalities, peak bodies and academics developed 10 action areas.
- Each state has identified which goals are most relevant to their needs and entered into bilateral agreements with the federal government to work toward those specific goals.
- The federal government has provided each state with funding to meet those goals, as well as an annual monitoring and evaluation framework to track outcomes.
- A new law plans to extend national investment in ECEC quality and participation into 2023 and 2024, with plans to investment 4 billion euros over two years.

Gute-KiTa-Gesetz action areas set out commitments to improving:

- The flexibility of ECEC
- Staff to child ratios
- The qualifications of educators
- The management of ECEC services
- The learning and care environment
- Health, including diet and exercise
- Language development
- Working conditions and professional development opportunities for educators
- Procedures, evaluation and data sharing between services
- Tailoring ECEC to diverse needs
- + lowering fees

Key lessons



Federal government taking on a novel leadership role in ECEC to improve quality across the country.



Federal government driving quality in a manner that is flexible to the needs of states. Agreements are tied to funding and measured outcomes.



Federal/State relations empower decision-makers with implementation experience. Co-design process for the action areas involved cross-government cooperation.



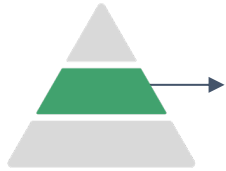
States can learn from the strengths and experiences of other States, but are not held back by challenges of other States and can define their own goals.



Promising initial improvements in some areas including educator qualifications, staff to child ratios, and fees, however results are not uniform across States and action areas. Partnerships have been modified and renewed; full impact of the partnerships to be determined in coming years.



Canada: Creating a national ECEC system through Federal-Province agreements



Canada is a federation. Provinces are responsible for ECEC, including funding, provisioning, regulation, curricula and monitoring. There is no federal department of education, nor is there a national entitlement to ECEC. There has been little consistency across the country when it comes to the cost, access, provision and quality of ECEC. Canada's new Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care is a major development in terms of the national government taking on a role in funding ECEC, and potentially shaping a Canada-wide ECEC system.

The Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework

- The federal government has reached bilateral early learning and child care agreements with all 13 Provinces and Territories to foster affordable, accessible, high-quality, flexible and inclusive ECEC.
- Federal Government will provide provinces and territories funding to achieve these aims, with a commitment of \$30 billion over 5 years made in 2021, and a commitment to indefinitely commit \$9.2 billion per year thereafter.
- Federal Secretariat key to driving process: brings together national province and territory governments, experts, and stakeholders.
- Annual progress reports will track the impact of federal funding on working toward framework goals.

Specific aims include:

- 50% reduction in average fees for ECEC by the end of 2022 (excluding Quebec)
- **Average of \$10 a day** (by 2025-26) for all regulated child care spaces in Canada
- Working with provinces and territories to grow places, including support for the not-for-profit sector
- Growth in number of child care spaces across the country
- Growing the ECEC workforce by providing early childhood educators with training and development opportunities
- Improving publicly available data to measure progress

Key lessons



Bold national vision and leadership. Federal government commits to significant investment in a provincial responsibility



Major, ongoing funding commitment encourages states to make bold changes to their ECEC systems.



Strong cross-government collaboration. Successfully navigated complex challenge of signing agreements with all provinces, whose governments, populations and ECEC systems vary widely.



Governments are taking a more active role in ECEC market



Federal government has limited constitutional basis to ensure outcomes are achieved



Major implementation challenges need to be worked through to achieve an affordable and high-quality ECEC system, e.g., funding formulas to achieve desired objectives still need to be worked out in Provinces such as Ontario.



Too early to assess progress toward outcomes



Major step toward achieving universal early childhood education throughout Canada?



National and municipal governments play a critical role in ECEC. Norway's ECEC governance structure facilitates strong local decision making toward national outcomes. Norway has 356 municipalities. Like local governments in Australia, municipalities vary significantly in area size and population, ranging from approx. 1,000 residents to over 500,000 residents.

System overview: government responsibilities:

National	National integrated system of ECEC for all children from age one to six. Legal entitlement to ECEC from age one.
National	Quality regulation, including staff to child ratios and minimum qualification levels
National	Sets a ceiling price for ECEC. Set regulations and reporting requirements for private for-profit providers
National	Finance ECEC by providing block grants to municipalities. Responsible for major increase in GDP allocated to ECEC over the past two decades.
County	Limited role. Oversee that national decisions are implemented throughout the country
Municipal	Own and run approximately half of kindergartens
Municipal	Fund public and private kindergartens. Autonomy to allocate national block grants as desired, local revenue can also contribute to ECEC funding. Charge parents fees (maximum fees regulated nationally)
Municipal	Oversee and monitor kindergartens

Strengths and challenges



Strong national framework that spans ECEC and schooling. Integrating education at a national level strong transitions to school and coherent system governance.



Municipalities have autonomy to tailor ECEC and other early childhood services to the needs of their community. Flexibility to adjust to changing needs of children and families over time, and good transparency in place across all provider types.



Easier to coordinate and integrate services. In Oslo, for example, kindergartens and child welfare services work very closely together. Role of municipalities in funding and monitoring services ultimately facilitates holistic approach to early childhood development.



Strong stakeholder involvement in key decisions, strengthens buy in and improves policy implementation.



Challenging for national government to ensure equal service provision and that targets are being met.



New targeted national grants may help to address specific issues.