

9 January 2023

Our Ref: 2022/641544
File No: X034528

Ms Jennifer Vincent
Director, Pricing & Policy
IPART
Level 16, 2-24 Rawson Place
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Ms Vincent,

Early Childhood Education and Care Affordability, Accessibility and Consumer Choice

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the *Draft Terms of Reference for review of NSW early childhood education and care affordability, accessibility and consumer choice*.

The City of Sydney (the City) has a long history of providing quality early childhood education and care services (ECEC) as well as facilitating key outcomes for ECEC in our community. This includes providing preschool, long day care, occasional care, and outside school hours care services, planning and monitoring of supply and demand for ECEC, delivering four new purpose-built ECEC centres, and leasing City-owned buildings to childcare providers.

The City currently operates nine ECEC services. Our most recent Childcare Needs Analysis published in 2019 noted approximately 140 ECEC services operating in the City of Sydney local government area. We welcome further research and engagement to understand the key factors underpinning the affordability and access to ECEC for our residents and workers and to inform broader reform and investment in ECEC.

We have reviewed the draft Terms of Reference and believe they will deliver on the objectives of the review, particularly the collation of more information on affordability, accessibility and consumer choice across different children and family groups, geographies, service types and provider types.

In addition, we propose the following recommendations to be included and/or considered within the terms of reference:

- In consultation with the community, explore what “affordable” ECEC looks like. We recognise that affordability is subjective and recommend an equity lens is applied to understand financial constraints and barriers accessing ECEC in NSW.
- The inclusion of local government within the terms of reference as a key stakeholder to engage and understand its role and responsibility, alongside both NSW and Australian Governments. Local governments are critical to the provision of ECEC services, understanding local community needs, community

strategic planning and land use planning. We recommend data be made available at a Local Government Area scale.

- Ensuring this review centres the voice of First Nations People; engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities to understand issues and opportunities relating to affordability, access and consumer choice for our First Nations People. The terms of reference and the review should consider how NSW can assist in meeting targets and outcomes for the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, especially “that children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years”.
- Consideration of mechanisms to increase collaboration between local, state and federal government to improve efficiency, quality and affordability outcomes for ECEC in NSW and Australia.

In addition to the terms of reference, we suggest the following peak sector organisations should be included as part of stakeholder engagement in 2023, including:

- Early Childhood Australia
- Community Early Learning Australia, and
- Network of Community Activities.

We would be happy to provide further input as part of the review process in 2023.

If you have any questions in relation to this submission, please contact [REDACTED] Manager Education and Care Services at the City of Sydney on [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Chief Executive Officer