

Hon Dr Aly MP  
Federal Minister for Early Childhood Education  
Minister for Youth

Dear Minister Aly,

I am writing to you and your department to seek your advice, direction and response to a concern I have raised with SA Ministers who are in Government. I raised this issue at the beginning of December 2023 due to the urgency of the matter of the closure of the Noarlunga Fleurieu Occasional Care - Childcare Centre. My correspondence was later forwarded to the SA Minister for Education, Training and Skills department to address. I can understand that the timing of my correspondence during the Christmas period may not have been conducive for any immediate action but this is due to the Child Care Centre's late correspondence to all parents, being notified of immediate closure due to not being able to access funding to maintain the centres service for 60 children, some of whom have disabilities'.

I initially received the Childcare correspondence on the 06<sup>th</sup> December 2023 by my daughter and raised my concern by email on the 08<sup>th</sup> of December, 2023 to relevant Ministers and was informed today on the 09<sup>th</sup> of January 2024, by the SA Department of Education, Training and Skills that my concerns for funding support falls onto the Federal Government.

As of the 08<sup>th</sup> of January 2024, I was in discussions with a staff member for Minister Boyer's office, who mentioned that my correspondence has been actioned from their office and sent to the Department of Education and awaiting a response. My concern is that the Fleurieu Occasional Care facility will close on the 30<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

Against the backdrop of the tremendous void that will be felt by families by the Centers' closure, especially those families who have disabled children, staff are another casualty that will be affected. I would have thought that a conversation between State Government departments and the Childcare Centre Management would have been the first step towards seeking funding options to maintain this service. The main concerns to seek immediate support is that:

- Noarlunga is seen as a low socioeconomic area that needs such essential services
- Many parents are both working to maintain a household due to current economic conditions and the childcare Centre fulfils an essential service to ensure financial survivability
- The childcare Centre has been operational for 33 years
- Three staff members each have over 20 years service at the Centre
- Staff will need to look for alternative employment
- The Centre is adapted to cater for children with disabilities (not many cater for such conditions)
- The Centre is used by many Aboriginal families in the area
- All resources and admin services are already in place to fulfil a needed childcare service.

Currently there is a Productivity Commission Inquiry into Early Childhood and Care facilities and operations [Early childhood education and care - Public inquiry - Productivity Commission \(pc.gov.au\)](https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiry/early-childhood-education-and-care) and I feel that the scope of my concern is a valid example of the impact a closure will have on families. As much as I am writing as a grandfather for my grandsons, I am also a voice for those who are now contemplating how they will navigate this dilemma. Given alternative childcare options to investigate has its own downside, as there is a waiting list and not all services cater for disabilities. Today my daughter went to view a childcare service in our local area for enrollment and was turned down as they do not cater for disabled children, very disheartening and emotional is an understatement.

My understanding is that the Noarlunga Fleurieu Occasional Care management have made several attempts to access funding over the last year to maintain this important service but to no avail. A social and community impact example is based on my family, as essential service workers.

- Daughter a police officer on rotating shifts – will decide if working is a viable option against the backdrop of police staff shortages in SA, and look after sons due to no services within local location
- Wife who is a senior midwife – considering staying at home to support grandsons against the backdrop of midwife staff shortages.
- Myself, a FIFO community development officer across NT, SA and WA remote communities and prisons, against the backdrop of staff shortages and recent increase in DV in communities - Looking to resign to look after grandsons.

I have attached my email correspondence to the relevant Ministers. The response from Minister Boyer's office has the reference number to my correspondence to inquire how the process is going.

As a voter, I am a little disgruntled as to the minimal urgency applied to a valid concern that affects so many vulnerable people who need such a service in the southern area of Adelaide.

Kind Regards