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The City of Salisbury's Submission to the Productivity Commission on the Early Childhood Development Workforce Study

It is of concern to the City of Salisbury that the reforms outlined in the Productivity Commission's draft report will add considerably to the cost of early childhood education and care for parents and caregivers in our City. The importance of ensuring that disadvantaged and vulnerable families are able to access good quality early childhood education and care services cannot be over-emphasised. Under the proposed reforms the impacts of the additional expense on parents and caregivers will quite predictably mean that childcare and preschool will become increasingly unaffordable and therefore less accessible for some families - particularly those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged have large families or have children with higher needs. While the report acknowledges there will be impacts on disadvantaged families there has so far been little attention paid to potential strategies for ameliorating those impacts.

It is widely acknowledged that the benefits of early engagement with education are numerous, leading to improved retention and educational outcomes. There is a risk that the most vulnerable children will be further disadvantaged by decreased opportunities to participate in early childhood development services. Moreover, for parents and caregivers there is an increased likelihood of employment impacts due to the reduced capacity to afford child care.

The crucial links between educational attainment and employment outcomes in the northern metropolitan region of Adelaide was recently researched in the *Northern Adelaide Skills, Workforce and Employment Blueprint*¹. Drawing attention to the scale of language, literacy and numeracy issues and the need to build fundamental skills and lift overall educational levels, a major finding of the report was that more targeted, co-ordinated and long-term effort needed to be applied to early childhood development to halt the cycle of inter-generational disadvantage.

This is an issue that has significant potential impacts for Salisbury and much of the northern metropolitan region due to the higher levels of disadvantage (as measured by the SEIFA index, summarised in Tables 1 and 2 below²), lower levels of educational attainment, higher rates of unemployment and higher levels of early childhood vulnerability (as measured by the Australian Early Development Index³) that are in evidence here. Salisbury has a comparatively high percentage of families with young children in the 0-4 and 5-9 year age ranges (6.70% and 6.79% respectively) when compared to Adelaide overall (5.63% and 5.91% respectively). Of these, 30.7% are classified as developmentally vulnerable on one or more of the AEDI domains and 16.5% are developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains. Compared to the national statistics which reveal 23.6% of children are vulnerable on one domain and 11.8% are vulnerable on two or more domains, this demonstrates a particular need for accessible and affordable early childhood development services in the Salisbury region.

¹ Commissioned by Northern Futures Inc. in 2010 and authored by Ed Carson and Lorraine Kerr.

² Australian Bureau of Statistics, Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), 2006.

³ Australian Early Development Index Local Planning Advisor, 2011

Table 1 SEIFA Index of Disadvantage in Local Government Areas of Adelaide

SEIFA index of disadvantage Local Government Areas in the Adelaide Statistical Division (ranked from greatest to least disadvantaged)	2006 SEIFA index of disadvantage
Playford (C)	885.6
Port Adelaide Enfield (C)	916.6
Salisbury (C)	943.7
Charles Sturt (C)	965.7
Gawler (T)	968.9
West Torrens (C)	984.7
Marion (C)	992.3
Onkaparinga (C)	992.9
Campbelltown (C)	1009.6
Adelaide (C)	1021.9
Norwood Payneham St Peters (C)	1023.1
Holdfast Bay (C)	1029.5
Tea Tree Gully (C)	1035.3
Prospect (C)	1036.6
Unley (C)	1064.3
Walkerville (M)	1067.2
Mitcham (C)	1069.9
Burnside (C)	1089.0

Table 2 SEIFA Index of Disadvantage for Suburbs in the Salisbury LGA

SEIFA index of disadvantage City of Salisbury's small areas (ranked from greatest to least disadvantaged)	2006 SEIFA index of disadvantage
Salisbury North - Edinburgh	836.7
Salisbury	886.3
Para Hills West - Parafield - Salisbury South	899.7
Parafield Gardens - Green Fields	900.6
Brahma Lodge - Salisbury Park - Salisbury Plain - Elizabeth Vale	908.5
Salisbury Downs	912.4
Burton - Non Urban West	919.1
Pooraka	933.1
Ingle Farm	936.1
Paralowie	941.8
City of Salisbury	943.7
Salisbury East	948.1
Para Hills	986.1
Para Vista - Valley View - Walkley Heights	989.9
Salisbury Heights	1056.8
Gulfview Heights	1071.2
Mawson Lakes	1093.4

Table 2 illustrates the existence of pockets of significant disadvantage within the City of Salisbury; a similar picture is illustrated by the AEDI statistics, shown in Table 3 below.

	Percentage of children 'developmentally vulnerable' on Australian Early Development Index							Characteristics of children							
	Phys	Soc	Emot	Lang	Comm	Vul 1 +	Vul 2 +	Number children	ATSI	ESL	Special needs	Need further assessment	Poor/ very poor lang	Attended preschool	SEIFA
Salisbury	14.1	12.3	14.5	9.3	12.3	30.8	16.6	1561	4.0%	17.9%	8.3%	14.3%	9.5%	86.6%	943.7
Burton	17.1	17.1	30.5	9.8	18.5	45.1	28.0	93	3.2%	17.2%	9.7%	17.4%	14.1%	90.3%	919.6
Gulfview Heights	2.8	13.9	16.7	5.6	2.8	22.2	13.9	38	2.6%	10.5%	5.3%	8.1%	2.6%	89.5%	1072.0
Ingle Farm	15.9	13.4	13.4	7.3	9.8	32.9	17.1	92	8.7%	16.3%	10.9%	14.8%	5.6%	78.3%	937.7
Mawson Lakes	4.9	7.8	8.8	2.0	5.9	13.7	7.8	106	0.9%	21.7%	2.8%	4.0%	3.8%	84.9%	1093.9
Para Hills	11.9	6.0	10.7	13.3	10.7	27.4	13.1	99	8.1%	14.1%	13.1%	13.4%	9.3%	88.9%	996.3
Para Hills West	15.0	25.0	20.0	10.0	25.0	50.0	20.0	25	8.0%	8.0%	16.0%	17.4%	20.0%	100.0%	908.5
Para Vista	16.7	8.3	8.3	20.8	16.7	29.2	25.0	27	3.7%	22.2%	11.1%	18.5%	11.1%	55.6%	950.4
Parafield Gardens	10.8	10.1	10.8	5.7	7.6	25.9	10.8	179	2.8%	26.8%	10.1%	12.9%	8.4%	84.4%	904.5
Paralowie	16.5	14.9	17.8	11.2	14.5	36.8	19.8	261	3.8%	22.2%	5.7%	10.5%	9.3%	88.1%	942.9
Pooraka	15.6	6.5	10.4	6.5	13.2	31.2	13.0	83	3.6%	28.9%	7.2%	13.6%	9.8%	81.9%	934.9
Salisbury	12.1	10.2	15.5	13.6	13.6	32.8	19.0	63	3.2%	19.0%	6.3%	15.8%	19.0%	87.3%	889.3
Salisbury Downs	18.9	11.3	11.3	11.3	15.1	28.3	17.0	59	0.0%	16.9%	6.8%	14.3%	8.8%	84.7%	915.4
Salisbury East	18.8	20.0	17.5	11.3	13.9	36.3	21.3	92	1.1%	8.7%	9.8%	25.0%	5.6%	92.4%	949.1
Salisbury Heights	4.7	7.0	9.3	7.0	4.7	16.3	7.0	48	6.3%	4.2%	8.3%	6.7%	10.6%	91.7%	1065.0
Salisbury North	26.1	17.1	16.4	16.2	20.7	43.2	25.2	120	8.3%	17.5%	7.5%	26.5%	16.0%	87.5%	844.2
Salisbury Park	16.7	16.7	26.1	8.3	20.8	29.2	25.0	27	3.7%	7.4%	11.1%	19.2%	7.4%	100.0%	951.4
Valley View	6.6	6.6	11.5	1.6	4.9	18.0	8.2	67	3.0%	10.4%	9.0%	10.4%	6.0%	85.1%	1010.6
Walkley Heights	8.5	12.8	6.4	4.3	6.4	23.4	6.4	53	0.0%	9.4%	11.3%	15.4%	7.5%	84.9%	1034.3

Table 3 illustrates the suburbs within the City of Salisbury that contain high levels of Aboriginal children, children for whom English is a second language, children with poor language skills, and children with special needs. For these families it is vitally important that early childhood education and care services are locally available, affordable and accessible. To this end and as a matter of urgency it is suggested that attention be given to developing strategies that support and enable equal access to early childhood development services for those families and communities who will be most impacted by the reforms.

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