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Young children and their families need better support, particularly in rural communities

Mallee Family Care (MFC), a leading community service organisation in the Mallee region, has welcomed the federal government's draft Early Years Strategy 2024-2034 which will shape Australia's efforts to improve outcomes for young children.

In a detailed response to government, MFC highlighted the importance of place-based approaches to addressing socio-economic and other drivers of poor outcomes in early childhood – particularly in regional, rural, and remote areas.

MFC CEO Teresa Jayet welcomed the draft Early Years Strategy, noting it was developed in consultation with stakeholders including MFC.

“Investing in early childhood is the key to reducing the lifelong risks of poor health, disability, substance abuse and other adverse outcomes of disadvantage at this critical life stage,” Ms Jayet said.

“We also welcome the focus on place-based approaches in the draft Strategy as we know these are critically important for the delivery of effective services in rural areas like the Mallee region.”

MFC's submission recommends the government work with stakeholders to develop a more robust definition of 'place-based' to ensure funding can be directed towards truly place-based organisations.

“We have also recommended the development of a comprehensive place-based framework, that builds on the expertise of place-based community service organisations like MFC to ensure that early childhood initiatives truly represent and address the unique challenges of specific geographic areas,” Ms Jayet said.

Another focus of the submission is on strengthening collaboration and coordination across jurisdictions, and portfolio areas of government.

“There are currently many missed opportunities in existing early childhood education, health and social systems to identify and address challenges and risk factors within families.

“We think the strategy could adopt more of a whole-of-government approach to early childhood and family support.”

Acknowledging the impact that housing and poverty has on early childhood outcomes, Ms Jayet also called on the government to directly address these issues within the draft Early Years Strategy.



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“Communities in the Mallee region are facing significant financial challenges, combined with a severe lack of affordable housing. We know that poverty and housing insecurity significantly hinder early childhood outcomes by restricting access to essential resources and experiences. We advocate for the inclusion of measures in the Strategy to tackle these challenges.”

MFC remains committed to actively contributing to the development of a robust Early Years Strategy, working collaboratively with the government and other stakeholders to ensure the wellbeing of young children across the Mallee region.

Mallee Family Care’s submission to the federal government’s draft Early Years Strategy 2024-2034 is available to read online at www.malleefamilycare.org.au

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