



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL
TERRITORY

The draft three year strategic plan for preschools in the ACT

Report Number 6
Standing Committee on Education, Community Services and Recreation
October 2000

Committee membership

Ms Kerrie Tucker MLA (Chair)
Mr Wayne Berry MLA (Deputy Chair)
Mr Harold Hird MLA

Secretariat

Ms Judith Henderson Secretary
Ms Emily Grayson

Resolution of appointment

The following general purpose standing committees be established to inquire into and report on matters referred to it by the Assembly or matters that are considered by the committee to be of concern to the community:

...a Standing Committee on Education, Community Services and Recreation to examine education, schooling, training services, children's, youth and family services and sport and recreation and any other related matter.

Minutes of Proceedings, No 2, 28 April 1998, pp 15-19. Amended 25 November 1999.

Terms of reference

On 21 October 1999, the Assembly resolved that the paper entitled *Draft Three Year Strategic Plan for Preschools in the ACT* be referred to the Standing Committee on Education, Community Services and Recreation for inquiry and report.¹

¹ *Minutes of Proceedings*, No 67, 21 October 1999, p 596.

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List of recommendations

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the Department of Education and Community Services adopt the vision, values and goals (including the suggestions made if supported) as set out in the *Draft three year strategic plan for preschools in the ACT*. (Paragraph 5.9)

Recommendation 2

The committee recommends that

- the criteria for deciding whether a preschool is viable as set out in the *Draft three year strategic plan for preschools in the ACT* be adopted with the exception of the criterion relating to the condition of the building; and
- the Department of Education and Community Services continue to develop its strategy for raising awareness about the need for parents to register their children for preschool before the September cut-off date. (Paragraph 5.12)

Recommendation 3

The committee recommends that a set of principles be developed to guide the trialing of new preschool models. These principles to include:

- the best interests of children be the paramount consideration;
- extensive consultation occur with all stakeholders on the selection of any new model;
- free, universal and accessible provision of preschool education for eligible students be provided;
- staffing structure and operation comply with Department of Education and Community Services' standards;
- the Department seek consensus with stakeholders on a timeframe for the implementation of any new model;

- stakeholders be represented on an implementation committee; and
- an evaluation strategy be developed and implemented. (Paragraph 5.16)

Recommendation 4

The committee recommends that, subject to demonstrated need and support from the communities involved, and in accordance with the principles outlined in recommendation 3, a trial of the amalgamation of non-viable preschools into a consolidated Department of Education and Community Services' preschool be conducted. (Paragraph 5.18)

Recommendation 5

The committee recommends that, subject to demonstrated need and support from the communities involved, and in accordance with the principles outlined in recommendation 3, the Department of Education and Community Services proceed to conduct a trial of the following models:

- purchase of places for individual children affected by the closure of a non-viable preschool; and
- amalgamation of a preschool centre into a primary school. (Paragraph 5.21)

Recommendation 6

The committee recommends that after consultation with the community the Government provide the committee, by August 2001, with an issues paper on funding preschool education in long daycare centres. (Paragraph 5.23)

Recommendation 7

The committee recommends that the Government develop a position paper on early childhood schools. (Paragraph 5.25)

Recommendation 8

The committee recommends that the consolidated community managed preschool model be further developed in consultation with the community. (Paragraph 5.27)

1. Introduction

Background

1.1. In 1998, the committee undertook an inquiry into the future provision of preschool education in the ACT. During that inquiry it became very clear to the committee that a long-term plan needed to be developed for government preschools within the context of early childhood service provision.

1.2. The Government accepted the committee's recommendation to develop such a long-term plan. During 1999, the Department of Education and Community Services engaged a consultant to develop a draft strategic plan. The Government then referred this draft three-year strategic plan for preschools to the committee for inquiry and report. The committee's role has been essentially to undertake a consultation process on the draft plan.

Government-funded preschool programs across Australia

1.3. As the ACT Auditor General reported there is no one single definition or approach to preschool in Australia. Preschool in most states covers three-to-five-year olds. *The Government Report on Services 2000* defines preschools as

services usually provided by a qualified teacher on a sessional basis in dedicated preschools. Preschool programs or curriculum may also be provided in long daycare centres and other settings. These services are primarily aimed at children in the year before commencing compulsory full-time schooling (four years old in all jurisdictions except WA where these children are five years old), although in NSW, Queensland, SA and the ACT younger children may attend.²

1.4. Funding for preschool is a State/Territory Government responsibility with the Commonwealth only providing supplementary funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander preschool programs.³

1.5. Children in Victoria, Tasmania and the Northern Territory are usually funded by government to attend preschool in the year before commencing schooling. Younger children in New South Wales, Queensland,

² *Report on Government Services 2000*, p 1103.

³ Senate Employment, Education and References Committee, *Childhood Matters*, 1996, p 10.

Western Australia, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory were able to access government funded preschool programs in 1998-99, the year the data was collected.⁴

1.6. In the ACT there were 93 children under the priority age enrolled in government funded preschools in February 2000.⁵ There were a further 73 students enrolled in early intervention units who did not access preschool services. The number of children under the priority age enrolled in preschools increases in the second half of the year when some students with English as a second language are granted early entry. In September 1999, there were 131 students who received early entry.⁶

1.7. The cost of government funded preschool varies across Australia and in some cases within jurisdictions. In Tasmania and the Northern Territory, in 1998-99, preschool services were provided at no compulsory cost to parents. In the ACT, Victoria and South Australia fees were not compulsory although they were usually paid by the majority of families. In New South Wales and Queensland services provided by the education departments were free, while services provided by other government-funded providers attracted a fee.⁷

Development of the draft plan

1.8. The methodology for the development of the draft plan as outlined in Appendix 1 of the plan was as follows.

1.9. An independent consultant was commissioned to seek views from a range of individuals and organisations with an interest in preschool education. More than 400 people (including approximately 200 parents and 200 teachers and assistants) participated in the consultation process.

1.10. The processes used by the consultant to obtain information that would provide a snapshot of views and inform the development of the strategic plan included:

- visits to preschools of different size, structure, age and geographic location;
- meetings with

⁴ *Report on Government Services 2000*, p 1111.

⁵ Department of Education and Community Services, *Government Preschool Bulletin*, February 2000.

⁶ Department of Education and Community Services, *Government Preschool Bulletin*, September 1999.

⁷ *Report on Government Services 2000*, p 1112.

- ◇ the Early Childhood Advisory Committee (ECAC)
- ◇ a joint consultative group of parents, unions and professional associations
- ◇ ‘Closer Ties’, a forum which represents a wide range of early childhood service providers
- ◇ staff of the Children’s Services Branch, Preschool Executive Officers and Child Care Advisors and senior managers in the Department of Education and Community Services
- attendance at a meeting of all preschool staff at which approximately 200 teachers and assistants responded to a short questionnaire
- a parent survey which was conducted through a combination of telephone interviews and written questionnaires
 - ◇ 90 letters inviting parents to participate in a telephone interview were distributed through nine preschools and child care services of different size and structure located across the northern, central and southern districts; parents who were willing to participate mailed their contact details to the consultant in a reply paid envelope; three attempts were made to contact each of the parents who had indicated their preferred time and day to be contacted; 38 of the 45 parents who indicated their willingness to participate were interviewed
 - ◇ the same questionnaire used in telephone interviews was distributed to 100 parents at a preschool and 100 parents at a child care centre; 72 completed questionnaires returned to the preschool in sealed envelopes and 63 returned to the child care centre were forwarded to the consultant
 - ◇ focus groups with parents, preschool teachers and assistants
 - ◇ 60 letters were distributed through 12 preschools and child care services in northern, central and southern districts inviting parents to participate in a focus group and requesting their reply direct to the consultant in a prepaid envelope
 - ◇ 54 teachers and assistants were telephoned and a faxed invitation sent requesting them to nominate their preferred time to attend a focus group

- ◇ 7 focus groups were held with a total of 44 teachers and assistants and 17 parents participating
- discussions with small numbers of Koori parents, parents of children with special needs and service providers in the disability area
- workshops using the information collected in the consultation processes as context for two one day workshops held with ECAC and staff of Children's Services Branch
- review of major reports including the Auditor General's Report No 1 of 1998 on the Management of Preschool Education (in the ACT) and the Report of the Standing Committee on Education 'The future provision of preschool education' (September 1998)
- submissions and letters received from early childhood organisations.

Responses to the draft plan

1.11. The draft plan was circulated widely. In October 1999, the Department of Education and Community Services sent it to all preschools, a copy for the parent association and a copy for the staff. It was also sent to all long daycare centres. In addition, the committee placed two advertisements in local newspapers—one in October 1999 and another in February 2000. These advertisements invited input to the inquiry and advised how to get a copy of the draft plan.

1.12. The committee decided to allow six months for the community to consider the draft and present their submissions. This time period, it was believed would not only allow adequate time, but also give both the 1999 and 2000 preschool parent groups the opportunity to have input. Since a few organisations had difficulty with the timeframe, it was extended.

1.13. Participants were able to respond in a number of ways. The committee decided to include in the draft plan a questionnaire developed by the department's consultant which asked participants to respond to the vision, goals, factors to be considered when deciding whether a preschool is viable, and proposed models on a five point scale. Participants were able, if they chose, to respond in other formats, for example, written submissions, written comments accompanying the questionnaire or by giving oral evidence at a public hearing.

1.14. The committee received a total of 43 submissions. These included 22 responses to the questionnaire and 21 written submissions which did not include a completed questionnaire.

1.15. The committee also took evidence from 11 people at public hearings.

Acknowledgment

1.16. The committee wishes to thank all those who participated in the inquiry.

2. A national direction for early childhood education

2.1. Significant change is occurring throughout Australia in the provision of preschool and childcare and the interaction between these services.

2.2. The expectations of parents are also changing. While parents continue to place a very high value on preschool education for their children in the year before school, they are increasingly placing a high value on the education of their children from a younger age. There is an increasing expectation that childcare services should deliver high quality early childhood development programs. The introduction of the Commonwealth's Quality Improvement and Accreditation System has raised parental awareness of early childhood development practices. Parents are shopping around for the best program for their child.⁸

2.3. Parents are also seeking more flexibility in session times to meet changing family needs, such as work or study commitments.

2.4. Stevenson points out that it is currently understood that there is little difference between the educational outcomes available from different types of early childhood services provided that the key determinants of quality care and education are present. Early childhood services complement the child's developing understanding of themselves and their environment by providing programs that:

- tap into a child's curiosity, sense of wonder and natural eagerness to learn
- foster children's confidence in their own abilities
- foster children's enthusiasm for learning through play which is the young child's natural approach to understanding the world
- recognise that young children learn through direct, concrete experiences
- allow children to choose activities that meet their interests

⁸ Stevenson Tony, *Early Childhood Services in the ACT*, prepared for the Children's Youth and Family Services Bureau, October 1998.

- support children's developing awareness of skills necessary for forming and maintaining friendships and relationships
- address children's development of the muscular system, increasing co-ordination and balance
- develop exploration of spatial and classification skills
- enhance children's rapidly developing understanding of and skill in language use.⁹

2.5. At the national level work is being undertaken to develop greater integration and coherency in policy development and practice across early childhood services.

The Early Childhood Education Working Party

2.6. In recognition of the importance of the early years, in April 1999, the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs asked the Conference of Education Systems Chief Executive Officers to establish an Early Childhood Education Working Party.

2.7. This working party's terms of reference are as follows.

1. Examine the key elements of early childhood education which lead to successful later learning with a focus on literacy, numeracy and social outcomes.
2. Consider research findings and current practices which result in effective strategies to support children's learning in the early years.
3. Examine links between early childhood settings that strengthen continuity of early learning.
4. Make recommendations to the Conference of Education Systems Chief Executive Officers about directions and action needed in the early years which lead to achievement of the national goals of schooling.

⁹ Stevenson Tony, *Early Childhood Services in the ACT*, prepared for the Children's Youth and Family

The working party's deliberations

2.8. The working party focussed on the broad range of education and care services that relate to the birth-to-eight age range because of the inseparable nature of care and education on a day to day basis for young children. It identified three key elements in all early childhood programs, namely:

- quality teaching and learning
- monitoring and intervention (special assistance)
- leadership and coordination.

2.9. In relation to its consideration of the research findings and current practices that result in effective strategies to support children's learning in the early years the working group noted the following.

There is overwhelming evidence for the educational, social and economic value of appropriate early intervention in the lives of all young children. Neuroscience research on brain development indicates convincingly the importance of early childhood, especially in the first three years, as a stage of development in its own right and as a precursor to later development. Cost benefit analyses of the effects of quality early childhood programs have found that for every \$1,000 US invested at least \$7,160 US had been returned to society in terms of reduction of crime, special education, income support and unemployment.

Children develop differing profiles with some requiring more support than others to achieve continuing success in the school system. We know that if these differences are not addressed, the gap between student achievements in school increases over time.

The quality of experiences early in life, prior to school, in whatever setting a child is cared for are of utmost importance. It cannot be assumed that more formal teaching and learning earlier is better or that no further action need be taken if we have got it right before school. It can be concluded, however, that nurturing, caring experiences in a consistent environment with a small number of carers is essential for all very young children, especially those who may be at risk in their later development. As children grow older, more cognitively oriented programs that are based on informal learning

experiences and include play programs with enriching social experiences are likely to have lasting effects.¹⁰

Implications of the research for policy and practice

2.10. Some of the main implications of the research for policy and practice identified in the discussion paper are as follows.

2.11. The development of true partnerships that:

- result in shared knowledge about children and their achievements, planned and monitored in ways that link the learning between home and the early childhood program; and
- minimise the need for children to experience difficult transitions

2.12. The development of consistent preservice education courses that enable a cohesive and flexible workforce and multiple career pathways for early childhood professionals is required. Early literacy and numeracy pedagogy needs to be included as essential elements of any tertiary early childhood education training course.

2.13. The need to improve co-ordination of early childhood education and care programs and health services at the local level by the provision of parent programs and resources designed to enhance children's learning.

2.14. The adoption by administrators of a new paradigm which

- takes a long-term view of the benefits of early learning;
- breaks down the traditional barriers of service provision;
- focuses on the child in the context of the family regardless of setting;
- provides overarching consistency that allows for local interpretation; and
- makes clear links between policy and research.

¹⁰ Conference of Education Systems Chief Executive Officers, Early Childhood Education Working Party, *A National Direction for Early Childhood Education, Discussion Paper, Executive Summary*, p 2.

Initiatives for consideration

2.15. The working party proposed a number of initiatives for consideration to shape a way forward, which are described in the following paragraphs.

The development of a national early childhood strategy

2.16. This strategy, for State and Territory and Federal policy development will be based on broad frameworks, under which

- each State, Territory and the Commonwealth reviews links between community services and early childhood services to provide a platform for prevention and early intervention services for all children and families, with development of an early childhood program based on common goals and principles but adapted to local diversity and maximising use of existing facilities (eg schools) for family programs;
- each State, Territory and the Commonwealth plan and promote the value of literacy, numeracy and social outcomes to families and caregivers as partners in early childhood education, with a national information campaign on the importance of early childhood;
- a review of early childhood training be undertaken across Australia with emphasis on better coordination of preservice training to break down barriers and recognise commonalities across the profession.

Establishment of a high level forum across jurisdictions

2.17. The forum will encompass agencies with responsibility for the early years, be accountable through regular reporting to MCEETYA and Community Services Ministers on strategic outcomes. It is proposed that this forum be responsible for the tasks related to the development of a national early childhood strategy as noted above and to develop

- a means to foster and strengthen cross sectoral communication and collaboration;
- a series of discussion papers on issues of relevance to early childhood programs to aid policy development, practice and a national research agenda;
- effective coordination between early childhood education and care.

Review of linkages between early childhood services

2.18. In order to collaborate in the administration of services and develop appropriate curriculum programs, starting school processes, and resources, it is proposed each State and Territory review linkages between early childhood services and primary schools.

Future preschool services in the ACT

2.19. Future preschool services in the ACT need to be considered in the context of our understandings of what is a quality early childhood service and the national initiatives to better integrate early childhood services.

3. Changing demographic patterns in the ACT

3.1. The ACT has experienced very high rates of population growth over the past 25 years. The population of the ACT increased from 160,000 in 1972, to approximately 313,000 in 2000.

3.2. During the time of high population growth the increasing population was largely accommodated by greenfields development in areas like Belconnen, Woden, Weston Creek and Tuggeranong. These new residential areas were predominantly established by young families with young children resulting in a high demand for community facility infrastructure such as schools and preschools.¹¹

3.3. A typical preschool enrolment profile of a suburb at the time indicates that enrolments peaked at about seven years after a suburb was first settled. This trend is followed by a number of years of enrolment decline until a stable long-term level is reached at about 20 years.¹²

Population forecasts

3.4. Canberra's population is not growing at the rate it did in previous times. The current growth forecast of 0.75 per cent, increasing to 1 per cent in the year 2002 and beyond is much lower than the population growth in the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s. The slight increase in growth forecasts is much lower than the national average.¹³

3.5. According to the Government's forecast, the major and most consistent component of Canberra's population increase is growth from natural increase. However, due to the continuing decreases in fertility and general ageing of the Canberra population, the predominance of natural increase is forecast to decrease. Another factor is that as the Canberra economy and labour market improve the current high levels of net interstate migration out of Canberra are forecast to decline.¹⁴

¹¹ ACT Government, Submission to the inquiry into the future provision of preschool education, p 7.

¹² *ibid*

¹³ Australian Capital Territory, *Population Forecasts 1998—2013*, Department of Urban Services, Canberra, June 1998, p 5.

¹⁴ Australian Capital Territory, *Population Forecasts 1998—2013*, Department of Urban Services, Canberra, June 1998, p 5.

Decline in preschool enrolments

3.6. This decline began a few years ago. Over the last three years there has been a significant decline in preschool enrolments as illustrated by Table 1.

Table 1 Preschool enrolments by year
(Compiled from Government Preschool Survey Bulletins)

Year	Enrolments	
	Feb	Mid year
1993	4209	4274
1994	n/a	4302
1995	4282	4429
1996	4085	4281
1997	4035	4000
1998	3833	3980
1999	3900	3972
2000	3694	n/a

Note

n/a There was no preschool census in February 1994 due to industrial action.

3.7. Table 3 shows that since 1995 there has been a gradual decline in preschool enrolments at both the February and mid-year censuses.

3.8. With the exception of 1997, the February enrolments have been lower than those at mid year.

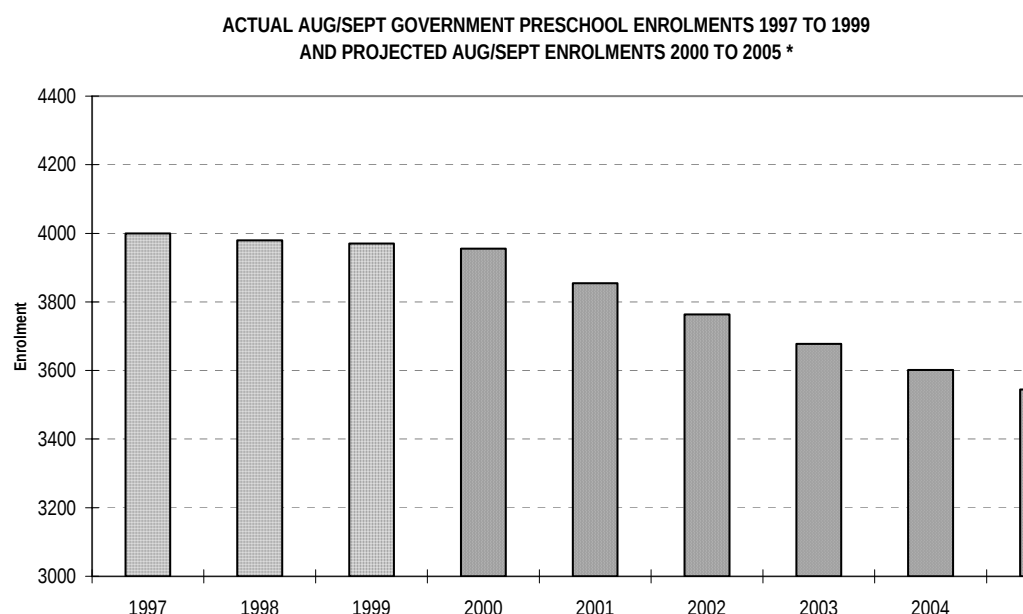
3.9. A comparison between preschool enrolments in February 1996 and February 2000 indicates a significant decline in all areas of Canberra except in Gungahlin where they have increased each year.¹⁵

Preschool enrolment projections

3.10. Over the next few years, the number of four-year-old children, that is, those eligible for preschool is forecast to gradually decline. The trend in preschool enrolments and projected preschool enrolments is shown at Figure 1.

¹⁵ ACT Department of Education and Training and Children's, Youth and Family Services Bureau, *Government Preschools Survey Bulletin*, February 1996 to February 2000.

Figure 1 Actual August/September Government Preschool enrolments 1997 to 1999 and projected August/September enrolments 2000 to 2005¹⁶



Source: ACT Department of Education and Community Services

* Enrolment figures include mainstream preschool students and students attending Uriarra Primary School, the Co-operative School, Koori Programs and students from integrated EIU's programs.

Mobility of the Canberra population

3.11. By national comparisons, the population of Canberra is very young and very mobile. People move in and out of Canberra and also move within Canberra. Data from the 1996 census demonstrate that in the five years prior to the census more than half of the people in Canberra had moved to their current residence with nearly a quarter of the population having moved from other suburbs in Canberra.¹⁷

3.12. In its inquiry into the future provision of preschool education in the ACT in 1998, the committee noted that the evidence was quite clear that although suburbs are constantly regenerating, it is highly unlikely the numbers of preschool-age children that existed when the suburb was first settled will ever be reproduced (assuming the number of dwellings in the catchment area remains the same).

3.13. Changes to the preschool enrolment policy, decided on in 1997, resulted in more flexibility for parents in choosing a preschool for their child. Until these changes, staffing planning was based on

¹⁶ Source: ACT Department of Education and Community Services.

¹⁷ Australian Capital Territory, *Population Forecasts 1998—2013*, Department of Urban Services, Canberra, June 1998, p 22.

enrolments from each preschool's designated priority enrolment area and included children living and cared for in that area. As a result of the changes, outside area registrations are considered in addition to priority enrolment area registrations when planning staffing for each preschool. This has made the task of projecting future demand for each preschool more complicated.

The effect of declining enrolments on the system as a whole

3.14. Decisions are made annually to adjust to declining enrolments with reductions in the number of groups operating in many preschools. This has led over time to an uneven distribution across districts. For example, in February 2000: in the South Tuggeranong area, 9 preschools catered for 22 per cent of the preschool population; while in North Canberra 10 preschools (eight of which operated part time) catered for only 7 per cent of the preschool population.¹⁸

Conclusion

3.15. There has been a decline in preschool enrolments during the last few years due to a decline in the number of eligible children in the community. This trend is expected to continue for at least the next several years. During this time preschools in some new suburbs will open with the result that Canberra's preschool services will need to be spread over a greater area. This will create challenges for planners.

3.16. There is some evidence of regeneration in some of the older suburbs. However, the extent of this is unclear from the evidence. Based on historical information, enrolments in a suburb peak after seven years, followed by a decline until a stable long-term level is reached about 20 years after the suburb was first settled. This would indicate that regeneration in suburbs over twenty years old will maintain rather than increase the level of demand for preschool places in the suburb.

3.17. Changes to the preschool enrolment policy, implemented in 1998, while providing much greater flexibility for parents, also make the process of forecasting demand for individual preschools more complicated.

¹⁸ Department of Education and Community Services, *Draft Strategic Plan for Preschools in the ACT*, October 1999.

4. Community views on the draft plan

4.1. This chapter will examine community views on the draft plan. It will deal with the general issues raised, followed by an analysis of each of the issues included in the questionnaire.

General issues

4.2. The comments made about the draft plan that were not in response to specific questions largely relate to perceived inadequacies with the plan. In summary the comments were:

- the document fails to adequately address the role of parents in the operation of preschools;¹⁹
- the consultation was inadequate;²⁰
- the document does not propose strategies for addressing the decline in enrolment projections;²¹
- the document does not adequately place itself in the context of the range of services needed by families;²²
- the issues of programs for three-year-olds is not addressed;²³
- the term ‘Koori’ as used in the document is inaccurate and inappropriate as in the ACT there are many indigenous students from communities all over Australia; and
- economic efficiency should not undermine access to quality preschool for all families in the ACT.²⁴

¹⁹ Submissions 8, 22, 23, 24, 25, 29, 30, 36, 38

²⁰ Submissions 9, 10, 12, 21, 30, 31, 34, 36.

²¹ Submission 15.

²² Submissions 19, 21.

²³ Submissions 21, 23,

²⁴ Submission 37.

The vision

4.3. There was general support for the vision:

Preschool education in the ACT promotes the development of attitudes and skills that will enable preschool children to confidently take their place as aware and active participants in the community.

4.4. Of those who responded to the questionnaire 76 per cent either strongly agreed or agreed with the vision as proposed. Twenty four percent disagreed. There were no responses that strongly disagreed. In addition, of those who did not send in a questionnaire, comments supporting the vision were made by two preschool parent associations and the Australian Education Union.

4.5. Suggestions from the responses for improving the vision statement included:

- use more child focussed language²⁵
- expand it to include recognition that preschool is often ‘community’ for a four-year-old²⁶
- include ‘knowledge’²⁷
- include ‘a love of learning’²⁸
- change ‘community’ to ‘communities’.²⁹

4.6. The committee suggests that the vision statement include a reference to the development of positive self esteem in children.

Conclusion

4.7. The vision was supported by a high proportion of respondents. Consideration needs to be given to including the suggestions made during the inquiry, which could be included if supported by further consultation.

²⁵ Submission 3.

²⁶ Submissions 4, 23.

²⁷ Submissions 9, 16, 23, 43.

²⁸ Submission 23.

²⁹ Submission 43.

The values

4.8. The values set out in the draft plan are as follows.

1. High professional standards
2. Universal access
3. Productive partnerships and collaboration
4. Providing flexible and responsive services
5. Respect for children's racial and cultural background
6. Respect for the needs and rights of children with developmental delay or disability
7. Accountability

4.9. There was overwhelming support for the values from respondents. Only one respondent disagreed with any of the values. That person disagreed with accountability as a value.

4.10. Preschool staff suggested that number 5 be amended to read 'Respect and provide for children's racial and cultural background'. Preschool staff also suggested that number 6 be amended to read 'Respect and provide for the needs of all children including those with developmental delay and disability'.³⁰

4.11. Preschool staff suggested an additional value: 'Education and life long learning'.³¹

4.12. The Canberra Preschool Society suggested that the values include reference to the vital role parents play in the delivery of the ACT preschool service as well as in the education of their children.³²

³⁰ Submission 43.

³¹ Submission 43.

³² Submission 36.

Conclusion

4.13. In summary, the values have general support from those who participated in the inquiry. They could be strengthened by the inclusion of the suggestions made, if further consultation indicates support for these suggestions.

Goals

Goal 1

4.14. Goal 1 is to introduce a continuous quality improvement program by December 2001 through:

- an early childhood curriculum framework for children aged 0-8 which is child centred, flexible and recognises the importance of play;
- enhanced professional development which includes kindergarten teachers as well as preschool and childcare staff; and
- improved communication between staff and parents by December 2001.

4.15. There was overwhelming support for Goal 1 from both those who responded to the questionnaire and those who sent in full submissions. Only one respondent to the questionnaire (a teacher) disagreed with any aspect of Goal 1. That person strongly disagreed with the need for an early childhood curriculum framework. Another teacher who did not respond to the questionnaire questioned the need for an early childhood curriculum framework. The Australian Education Union (AEU) raised the issue of how existing curricula for the K-2 years in the primary school, that is, students aged five to eight years, will be taken into account in the development of the early childhood curriculum framework.

Goal 2

4.16. Goal 2 is to improve opportunities for disadvantaged children and those with special needs by December 2000.

4.17. There was unanimous support for this goal from those who responded to the questionnaire and no negative comments in the submissions.

4.18. The Australian Education Union pointed out that emphasis needs to be given to the resource implications of such a commitment.³³

Goal 3

4.19. Goal 3 is to improve transitions between early childhood settings (ie home, childcare and school) through better reporting and use of developmentally appropriate 0-8 curriculum by September 2002.

4.20. This goal also received very strong support. Four of the respondents to the questionnaire neither agreed nor disagreed, with the vast majority of the remainder strongly agreeing.

4.21. Most respondents who commented on this goal in submissions were also strongly supportive. The Australian Education Union stated that it strongly supports the building and strengthening of links between preschools and primary schools.³⁴

4.22. The Association of Long Daycare Directors (Community Based) reported that there is no networking group in operation which include staff working in childcare centres in the ACT. At the time of reporting, moves to highlight the need for such a group had been undertaken by The Closer Ties Forum and the ACT Branch of the Australian Early Childhood Association. The Association of Long Daycare Directors (Community Based) strongly supported the development of stronger links between childcare services and other early childhood services and suggested that this be done in consultation with the peak early childhood groups.³⁵

4.23. One submission expressed concern about how the parties would find time to liaise with each other.³⁶

³³ Submission 41.

³⁴ Submission 41.

³⁵ Submission 42.

³⁶ Submission 11.

Goal 4

4.24. Goal 4 is to develop a planning system that provides equitable access to a sustainable early childhood system by September 2001.

4.25. The majority of responses to the questionnaire agreed with this goal. There were only two responses that expressed disagreement—one from a preschool parent association³⁷ and one from a parent.

Conclusion

4.26. All the goals received strong support from participants. However, as one submission pointed out while the issue of respect for the needs of children with culturally and racially diverse backgrounds is acknowledged as a value, it is not specifically addressed in any of the goals.³⁸

Factors to be considered when deciding whether a preschool is viable

4.27. The draft plan recommended nine criteria to be used as determinants of viability of a preschool or group of preschools. These included the criteria already in place plus changing demographics, the impact of relocation policies on local communities and the condition of buildings.

4.28. General comments about viability criteria included:

- options for improving preschool viability and utilising preschool infrastructure should be explored;³⁹
- the scope of preschool provision should be changed to better meet parent and community need;⁴⁰
- viability should be addressed on an individual preschool basis;⁴¹

³⁷ [Submissions 15](#)

³⁸ Submission 3.

³⁹ Submissions 15, 17, 32.

⁴⁰ Submission 15.

⁴¹ Submission 26.

- the role of preschools within local suburban communities needs to be canvassed;⁴²
- a more vigorous consultation exercise is needed about the detail of the criteria.⁴³

4.29. Responses to each of the criteria are outlined below.

The number of children relative to service models. A threshold of 17 registrations for a part-time preschool and 34 for a full-time preschool should be used in conjunction with other determinants of viability.

4.30. Of the participants who answered the questionnaire 12 agreed or strongly agreed with this criterion. Three disagreed or strongly disagreed, while eight neither agreed nor disagreed.

4.31. Those who responded with comments raised the following points:

- threshold enrolments should not be a factor in determining viability;⁴⁴ and
- there is a lack of commitment from the Department of Education and Community Services to make preschools viable.⁴⁵ It was suggested that the department review methods to encourage registrations and to inform parents of the importance of preschool education.⁴⁶

4.32. The committee raised with the Minister the matter of how the community is informed of the need to register for preschool enrolment by the September cut-off date each year. The Minister advised that the department undertakes an extensive program of advertising. Posters and leaflets are distributed to doctors' surgeries, government shopfronts, health centres, public libraries, preschool parent associations and preschools. In addition advertisement are placed in local papers over a three-week period in July followed by an extensive media campaign conducted in August⁴⁷.

⁴² Submissions 26,

⁴³ Submission 41.

⁴⁴ Submission 15, p 5.

⁴⁵ Submission 36; Canberra Preschool Society, Transcript, p 4.

⁴⁶ Submission 36, p 6.

⁴⁷ Minister for Education, correspondence dated 11 August 2000.

**Past enrolment patterns and configuration of preschools in close proximity.
Preschool staffing decisions are based on the cluster of preschools rather than
on individual preschool units**

4.33. Fifteen participants who answered the questionnaire were in agreement with this criterion. Six opposed it and one neither agreed nor disagreed. One preschool parent association expressed opposition to the criterion in a written submission.

**Socioeconomic considerations, for example, where it is considered that if the
preschool is not available, the families would not be able to transport their
children to preschool**

4.34. There was overwhelming support for this criterion. Only one respondent disagreed.

**Access issues for families where service consolidation is the recommended
option**

4.35. There was also overwhelming support for this criterion, with no respondent disagreeing.

**Location relative to other preschools, clusters of preschools, childcare centres
and schools and identification of any unintended consequences of a
recommended option**

4.36. There was strong support for this criterion with only two respondents, a parent and a preschool parent association disagreeing. Another parent association opposed this criterion in a written submission.⁴⁸

**Location of early intervention units and the need for concurrent preschool
groups for integration**

4.37. Again, there was strong support for this criterion, with only two respondents a parent and a preschool parent association disagreeing.

⁴⁸ Submission 15.

Current and projected demographic pattern of suburb and surrounding suburbs

4.38. This criterion also received strong support. Again only two respondents to the questionnaire, a parent and a preschool parent association expressed opposition. In addition, one parent association that provided a written submission disagreed with this criterion.

Characteristics of the community, for example, where a cluster of rental housing impacts on numbers during the year in cases where family relocations are made (eg Defence) after the annual survey is completed

4.39. Only one respondent disagreed with this criterion.

The condition of the building taking into account the projected cost of upkeep and maintenance

4.40. This criterion drew the highest level of opposition of all. Nine respondents to the questionnaire either supported or strongly supported the criterion. Nine were opposed or strongly opposed, while five neither agreed nor disagreed. In addition, several of the written submissions and several witnesses at public hearings expressed strong opposition.⁴⁹ The Canberra Preschool Society reflected the views of others who opposed this criterion when it stated that it was concerned that if the condition of the building became a criterion it alone may be used as an excuse to close preschools particularly in older suburbs.⁵⁰ The Primary Principals' Association made the point that any building from which a preschool program operates should be in a suitable condition.⁵¹

4.41. The committee discussed this matter with the Minister and officials. The committee was told that the condition of the building needs to be a consideration for a range of occupational health and safety issues, however, it is not the only consideration.⁵²

Conclusion

4.42. With the exception of the condition of the building, there was strong support for the viability criteria set out in the draft plan, although the AEU stressed that more vigorous consultation is needed on the detail of some of the criteria. Some felt that the department is not doing enough to raise awareness

⁴⁹ For example, submissions 15, 25, 26.

⁵⁰ Transcript, p 5.

⁵¹ Submission 13.

⁵² Transcript, p 43.

about the need for children to be registered for preschool before the annual September cut-off date.

Other models for preschool provision

4.43. The draft strategic plan proposed a number of other models for preschool provision that could be considered in addition to the current models, namely:

- amalgamation of non-viable preschools into a consolidated Department of Education and Community Services preschool
- amalgamation of non-viable preschools into a consolidated community-managed preschool
- amalgamation of preschool centres into a primary school
- preschool as a component of an early childhood school
- purchase of a limited number of preschool places for individual children affected by the closure of non-viable preschools.

4.44. The information provided in the draft plan on the models is not detailed. The plan does not explain how these models would operate and how they would be adopted. Some suggested that it would have been useful had the draft plan included a discussion on the pros and cons of models operating in other parts of Australia and overseas so that comparisons could be made. A number of respondents indicated that they found it difficult to make an informed response to the proposed models as they did not have sufficient information.

4.45. In the following sections the responses to each of the models are analysed. One respondent, a preschool parent association, did not support any of the proposed models because they objected to most of the viability criteria.⁵³

Amalgamation of non-viable preschools into a consolidated Department of Education and Community Services preschool

4.46. Of those who responded to the questionnaire almost 75 per cent agreed. Just under 25 percent disagreed.

⁵³ Submission 15.

4.47. General support was also given by the Canberra Preschool Society and the Australian Education Union (AEU) in their submissions.

Amalgamation of non-viable preschools into a consolidated community managed preschool

4.48. None of those who responded to the questionnaire agreed with this model. One preschool parent association stated in their written submission that the model is acceptable. In written submissions, both the Canberra Preschool Society and the AEU rejected the model. Strong concerns were expressed about the status, working conditions, and security of teachers; the support for teachers; and funding issues.

4.49. This model is one that the community is unfamiliar with. The information provided in the draft plan about the model is sketchy. The community may have responded differently if the model was more fully described.

Amalgamation of preschool centres into a primary school

4.50. Nine respondents to the questionnaire agreed with this model, while 12 disagreed. In written submissions the AEU gave strong support for the model as did Hawker School and Chisholm Preschool Parents Association. The Canberra Preschool Society stated that while it is aware of the benefits this model could bring to the teaching staff, and the improved transition from preschool into primary school, it is hesitant to endorse the model due to a number of concerns. These concerns include safety and hygiene, disbursement of parental financial contributions, the implications of preschool funding in relation to school based management, the structure of a preschool parent association within the primary school, and the fact that some preschool children do not proceed onto the closest primary school.

4.51. One community, Hawker, offered to trial this model.

Preschool as a component of an early childhood school

4.52. This model received strong support with just over 75 per cent of respondents to the questionnaire in agreement. This is not a new model for Canberra as the Cooperative School at O'Connor, an early childhood school, has been in operation for many years.

4.53. In written submissions, the AEU stated that it would be prepared to support the implementation of such a model on a case by case basis.⁵⁴

4.54. The Canberra Preschool Society reported that it would need more information on the model before commenting.⁵⁵

Purchase of a limited number of preschool places for individual children affected by the closure of non-viable preschools

4.55. This model received a mixed response. It was not supported by respondents to the questionnaire. Thirteen respondents strongly disagreed with the proposal, with only six agreeing.

4.56. In written submissions, the Canberra Preschool Society and the AEU indicated support on a case by case basis on the understanding that no other arrangements are viable. A number of other submissions supported the model.⁵⁶ The Association of Long Daycare Directors (Community based) and Blue Gum Early Learning Centre argued that funding should be provided for 10.5 hours per week preschool for all eligible children attending long daycare centres.⁵⁷

4.57. The major concerns reported about this proposal were:

- the program provided in a daycare centre may not be comparable to that provided in a sessional preschool;⁵⁸
- it may not be possible to address literacy, numeracy, socialisation and other aspects of the eight key learning areas in a childcare setting;⁵⁹
- qualifications of staff delivering the program in long daycare may not be comparable to those required in Department of Education and Community Services' sessional preschool programs;⁶⁰
- working conditions for staff delivering preschool programs in long daycare may differ from those of staff in government preschools;⁶¹

⁵⁴ Submission 41.

⁵⁵ Submission 36.

⁵⁶ For example Submissions 3, 19, 42, Transcript p 51.

⁵⁷ Submission 42, Transcript, p 7.

⁵⁸ Submissions 8, 12

⁵⁹ Transcript, p 8.

⁶⁰ Submissions 12, 36,

⁶¹ Submissions 8, 12

- it would reduce the number of positions available for preschool teachers in the Department of Education and Community Services;⁶²
- in a daycare setting four-year-olds would have diluted learning opportunities as staff would also be occupied with child care duties for younger children;⁶³
- session times longer than four hours are not considered appropriate learning experiences for four-year-olds because they hinge on care and preschool is education not care.⁶⁴
- funding and accountability arrangements need to be clarified.

4.58. However, it was also pointed out that:

- a large number of childcare centres in the ACT have qualified teachers on their staff who offer programs based on the eight key learning areas;
- care is an important aspect of all early childhood programs—care and education are now seen as complementary and inseparable⁶⁵;
- many parents would like longer session times including full day programs;⁶⁶ and
- children can get a quality early childhood education in a range of settings.⁶⁷

4.59. In relation to the proposal put to the committee that long daycare centres be funded to provide 10.5 hours of preschool to eligible children, the committee considers that the matter needs to be explored further. Even though the committee is aware that the matter has been under consideration for several years, the draft plan neglected to deal with this issue.

4.60. There are approximately 500 children enrolled in long daycare services who are eligible for a Government preschool, but do not attend. Reasons for non-attendance are varied and include parents having insufficient flexibility in working arrangements to enable them to transport their children between daycare and preschool during the day; and a view that it is better for the child not to be experiencing multiple care arrangements during the day.

⁶² Submission 8.

⁶³ Submission 36.

⁶⁴ Submission 36.

⁶⁵ Transcript, p 49.

⁶⁶ Submissions 14, 42.

⁶⁷ Transcript, p 58; submission 19.

4.61. The committee raised the matter with both community members and the Minister for Education and officials. It became apparent that there needs to be more thinking on many aspects of this matter including funding and payment arrangements. However, the committee considers that the matter must be addressed as part of the Government's commitment to more flexible and equitable provision of preschool education. The onus is on the Government to further explore this model in consultation with the community.

Conclusion

4.62. From the responses there appears to be community support for the amalgamation of non-viable preschools into a consolidated ACT Department of Education and Community Services preschool. Responses to the other models were less positive. The level of detail provided about some of the proposed models limited people's understanding of how they would work in practice. A key issue, which needs to be thought through in relation to the community managed preschool and the purchasing of preschool places, is the funding arrangement. At present all eligible ACT children may access the free preschool service provided by the Department of Education and Community Services for 10.5 hours per week. (Preschool parents are also asked to pay a voluntary contribution.) Any new models that are introduced must ensure that this free service is maintained. The failure to consider the purchase of preschool places in long daycare centres for eligible children whose parents are unable to or choose not to take them to a sessional preschool is a flaw in the draft plan.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1. This chapter draws conclusions about the major issues raised and sets out the committee's recommendations.

5.2. The government preschool system in the ACT is well supported with approximately 90 per cent of eligible children attending each year. The system is strongly grounded in the community with preschool parent associations taking on significant responsibilities for the provision of equipment and the cleaning of buildings.

5.3. The *Draft three year strategic plan for preschools in the ACT* proposed a direction for the Department of Education and Community Services to build on the strengths of the current government preschool system, within the context of early childhood services in the Territory, and taking into account changing family needs, national directions in early childhood education and care, and demographic trends.

5.4. Over the last 30 years social and economic factors have resulted in the expansion of early childhood education and care services, particularly long daycare services. In the ACT, many four-year-old children attend both long daycare and sessional preschool each week. Others attend sessional preschool only, while yet another group attends only a long daycare service, many of which offer a preschool program with qualified preschool trained staff. It is currently understood that there is little difference between the educational outcomes available from different types of early childhood services provided the key determinants of quality care and education are present. It is generally accepted that all education contains a care component and that care involves education.

5.5. There is convincing neuroscientific research evidence of the importance of early childhood as a precursor to later development. The quality of experiences of a child prior to school age, in whatever setting a child is cared for are of the utmost importance. The national initiatives that are developing are to be applauded. These initiatives are based on a new paradigm which:

- takes a long-term view of the benefits of early learning
- breaks down the traditional barriers of service provision
- focuses on the child in the context of the family regardless of setting

- provides overarching consistency through the development of a national early years strategy that allows for local interpretation
- makes clear links between policy and research.

5.6. Demographic projections indicate that there will be a slow decline in the number of eligible preschool children in the ACT over the next several years. This poses particular problems for the management of government preschools as there will also be a need to build new preschools in developing areas. At present the Government's policy is to limit the amount of operational funding for preschools on the basis of eligible student numbers. As the committee stated in its 1998 report, if the Government continues to adopt this approach, there will be a need to rationalise services in some areas.

Responses to the draft plan

Vision, values and goals

5.7. After examining the evidence received, the committee found that there was general support for the vision, values and goals as set out in the draft plan. Some suggestions were made for additions and amendments to the vision and values. If further consultation on these suggestions indicates they are supported they should be included.

5.8. In relation to the goals, the committee's attention was drawn to the fact that while the issues of respect for the needs of children with culturally and racially diverse backgrounds is acknowledged as a value, this issue is not specifically addressed in the goals. The committee considers that such an important issue needs to be addressed in the goals.

Recommendation 1

5.9. The committee recommends that the Department of Education and Community Services adopt the vision, values and goals (including the suggestions made if supported) as set out in the *Draft three year strategic plan for preschools in the ACT*.

Factors to be considered when deciding whether a preschool is viable

5.10. The criteria set out in the draft plan for deciding whether a preschool is viable were strongly supported except for the condition of the building. Most of the criteria have been in place for a few years and therefore have been tested and, it would appear from the evidence, largely accepted. The new criteria

suggested in the plan relate to the condition of the building, changing demographics and the impact of relocation policies on local communities. The AEU claimed that more vigorous consultation is needed on some of the criteria. The committee is concerned that condition of the building even when taken into account with the other factors could be used as a deciding factor on the viability of a preschool, which in the committee's view would be inappropriate.

5.11. Some concerns were expressed about the need for the Department of Education and Community Services to do more in relation to raising community awareness about the need to register children for preschool by the annual September cut-off date. The committee notes that the department has a strategy in place for doing this, however considers that there is always room for improvement.

Recommendation 2

5.12. **The committee recommends that**

- **the criteria for deciding whether a preschool is viable as set out in the *Draft three year strategic plan for preschools in the ACT* be adopted with the exception of the criterion relating to the condition of the building; and**
- **the Department of Education and Community Services continue to develop its strategy for raising awareness about the need for parents to register their children for preschool before the September cut-off date.**

Other models for preschool provision

5.13. The draft plan proposed that the following models be considered in addition to the current models:

- amalgamation of non-viable preschools into a consolidated Department of Education and Community Services preschool
- amalgamation of non-viable preschools into a consolidated community-managed preschool
- amalgamation of preschool centres into a primary school
- preschool as a component of an early childhood school

- purchase a limited number of preschool places for individual children affected by the closure of non-viable preschools.

5.14. The committee considers that it is timely to consider new preschool models. There is a need for more flexibility to meet the needs of families in today's society. Any new models need to ensure that the fundamental philosophy of preschool education of learning through play is maintained and the importance of community development that occurs through preschools promoted. The committee notes the maintenance of employment and working conditions of staff in government preschools was an important issue for preschool staff.

5.15. There are a number of principles that must be adhered to in introducing new models. These relate to consultation with stakeholders, the financial arrangements for families, staffing and operation, the timetable for implementation, the implementation process, and evaluation of the models. When faced with possibility of trialing a new model, the community may identify other principles.

Recommendation 3

5.16. The committee recommends that a set of principles be developed to guide the trialing of new preschool models. These principles to include:

- **the best interests of children be the paramount consideration;**
- **extensive consultation occur with all stakeholders on the selection of any new model;**
- **free, universal and accessible provision of preschool education for eligible students be provided;**
- **staffing structure and operation comply with Department of Education and Community Services' standards;**
- **the Department seek consensus with stakeholders on a timeframe for the implementation of any new model;**
- **stakeholders be represented on an implementation committee; and**
- **an evaluation strategy be developed and implemented.**

5.17. There was strong support for the amalgamation of non-viable preschools into a consolidated Department of Education and Community

Services' preschool. The committee considers that a trial of this model could be undertaken if there is a demonstrated need and support from the communities involved.

Recommendation 4

5.18. The committee recommends that, subject to demonstrated need and support from the communities involved, and in accordance with the principles outlined in recommendation 3, a trial of the amalgamation of non-viable preschools into a consolidated Department of Education and Community Services' preschool be conducted.

5.19. Although the purchase of a limited number of places for individual children affected by the closure of non-viable preschools received a mixed response, the committee considers that, with further development, in some cases this option may be a suitable option. For example, in a community where a preschool has closed due to unviability, there may be a childcare centre that operates a preschool program within easy access to the residents. Such an arrangement could be more accessible than travelling to the closest preschool by an indirect bus route.

5.20. Similarly, the amalgamation of preschool centres into primary schools also received mixed support. However, the committee considers that this option should not be dismissed. It should be trialed and evaluated. Trialing would be easier if the preschool centre was either located in the primary school building or in separate grounds adjacent to the primary school. The financial arrangements and the role of the preschool parent association would need to be carefully defined as part of the trial. One community, Hawker, indicated to the committee its willingness to participate in such a trial.

Recommendation 5

5.21. The committee recommends that, subject to demonstrated need and support from the communities involved, and in accordance with the principles outlined in recommendation 3, the Department of Education and Community Services proceed to conduct a trial of the following models:

- **purchase of places for individual children affected by the closure of a non-viable preschool; and**
- **amalgamation of a preschool centre into a primary school.**

5.22. The committee is disappointed that none of the proposed models addressed the issue of ACT Government funded preschool in long daycare centres for children other than those affected by the closure of a non viable preschool. The committee considers that this matter needs to be addressed in the context of the provision of more flexible preschool programs.

Recommendation 6

5.23. The committee recommends that after consultation with the community the Government provide the committee, by August 2001, with an issues paper on funding preschool education in long daycare centres.

5.24. In relation to preschool as a component of an early childhood school, the model was well supported by participants in the inquiry. The committee notes that this is not a new model. The Cooperative School at O'Connor has operated successfully as an early childhood school for many years. The committee therefore does not consider it necessary to trial this model. The question becomes one of whether the Government has formally evaluated this model and considers it appropriate to establish more early childhood schools.

Recommendation 7

5.25. The committee recommends that the Government develop a position paper on early childhood schools.

5.26. While the amalgamation of non-viable preschools into a consolidated community managed preschool was not well supported by participants in the inquiry, the committee does not believe that this option should be abandoned totally. The information on how such an arrangement would work in practice was simply not included in the draft plan. The community needs considerably more information before it can make an informed decision on the value and appropriateness of such a model. There may be communities that would be well suited to such a model.

Recommendation 8

5.27. The committee recommends that the consolidated community managed preschool model be further developed in consultation with the community.

Kerrie Tucker MLA
Chair
9 October 2000

Appendix 1 Submissions received

1. Ms Helen Mitchell
2. Ms Sue Jennings – Wattle Early Childhood Centre
3. Ms Pauline Brown – CHADS
4. Ms Rosanne Anderson
5. Ms Kathi Schlesinger – Miles Franklin Preschool
6. Ms Alison Brinkley
7. Mr Chris Harris and Ms Rowan Simpkin – Indigenous Education Unit
8. Ms Lorraine Batterham – Preschool Teachers Professional Association
9. Ms Lorraine Batterham – Teacher-In-Charge, Mt. Neighbour Preschool
10. Ms Deanna Hazell – President, Australian Early Childhood Association, ACT Branch
11. Ms Fiona McKinnon
12. Ms Peronelle Windeyer – Teacher-In-Charge, South Curtin Preschool
13. Ms Chris Pilgrim – Primary Principals’ Association
14. Ms Helen Kilborn
15. Ms Louise Watson – Parents’ Association Reid Preschool
16. Mrs Janet McCotter
17. Ms L Watson
18. Ms Gillian Shaw
19. Ms Joanne Maples
20. Ms Mara Franco
21. Ms Maureen Hartung – Blue Gum Early Learning Centre
22. Ms Jenny Weir and Mr David Game – Downer Preschool Parents’ Association
23. Ms Felicity de Plater – Griffith Preschool
24. Ms Anna James – Aranda Preschool Parents Association
25. Mr David Pearson – Waramanga Preschool Parents Association
26. Ms Ruth Mahon – Pearce Preschool Parents Association
27. Mawson Preschool Parent Association
28. Ms Jo Ratcliffe – Weston Preschool
29. Ms Deborah Killen – Miles Franklin Preschool Parents Association
30. Ms Bridget Carrick – Farrer Preschool Parents Association
31. Ms Jenny Helmore – Chisholm Preschool Parent Association
32. Cook Preschool Parents Association
33. Mr Michael Stone – Fraser Preschool Parents Society
34. Ms Robyn Bradley – Lyons Preschool Committee
35. Ms Christine Wanjura
36. Ms Carmen Pearce – Canberra Preschool Society

37. Ms Pam Tacheci – Narrabundah Early Childhood Centre Parent Association
38. Mrs K Collins – Latham Preschool Parents Association
39. Ms Julie Biles – National Council of Women of the ACT
40. Mrs Di Watt – The Hawker School
41. Ms Fiona MacGregor – Australian Education Union
42. Ms Norma Williams - Association of Long Daycare Directors (Community Based) ACT
43. Minister for Education

Appendix 2—Witnesses appearing at public hearings

Thursday 8 June 2000

For the Canberra Preschool Society

Ms Carmen Pearce, President
Ms Diane Thornton, Co-ordinator

For the Preschool Teachers' Professional Association

Ms Fiona McKinnon
Ms Jane Murray

For the Australian Early Childhood Association

Ms Deanna Hazell, President
Ms Rhondda Dawes, Vice President

For the Association of Long Day Care Directors (Community Based) ACT

Ms Norma Williams

For the Department of Education and Community Services

Mr Bill Stefaniak, Minister for Education
Ms Sue Birtles, Executive Director, Children's Youth and Family Services
Bureau
Ms Jill Farrelly, Director Children's Services

Thursday 22 June 2000

For Blue Gum Early Learning Centre

Ms Maureen Hartung, Executive Director

For the Department of Education and Community Services

Ms Sue Birtles, Executive Director , Children's Youth and Family Services
Ms Jill Farrelly, Director Children's Services