# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Childcare shortages holding back Eyre Peninsula families and economy

The Eyre Peninsula's peak local government and economic development bodies are calling for a new approach to regional childcare funding, warning that subsidies cannot help families who have no service to access.

In a joint submission to the Senate inquiry into early childhood education and care in rural, regional and remote communities, the Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association (EPLGA) and Regional Development Australia Eyre Peninsula (RDAEP) have called for ongoing funding to sustain services in smaller communities.

EPLGA President Mayor Dean Johnson said limited access to care was affecting children, families and the delivery of essential services.

"When parents can't find a childcare place, they can't return to work, increase their hours or undertake training," Mayor Johnson said.

"The Australian Government has taken positive steps through childcare subsidies, infrastructure grants and improvements to educator wages but a subsidy or a three-day guarantee offers little practical help where there is no service to use."

"We need funding that recognises demonstrated community need and helps services meet their ongoing costs, especially when small enrolment numbers can't support a conventional commercial model."

The joint EPLGA/RDAEP submission recommends reforming Commonwealth funding assessments to give greater weight to unmet demand, geographic isolation and regional workforce needs, alongside recurrent funding for services in small and dispersed communities.

It also calls for flexible, locally delivered educator training, coordinated investment in suitable community facilities, and changes allowing multiple approved Family Day Care educators to operate from a shared venue with appropriate safeguards.

RDAEP Chair Sue Chase AM said investment in childcare would deliver substantial benefits for the region's workforce and economy.

"Research that the RDAEP commissioned in 2023 estimated that meeting our region's demand for childcare could allow more than 1,000 parents to work full time or increase their hours," Ms Chase said.

"That could generate approximately $44 million in additional household income each year, alongside $11 million in annual wages from new early childhood sector jobs."

“Reliable childcare is essential infrastructure for regional economic development, and investment decisions need to recognise the wider benefits for workforce participation, productivity and community sustainability.”

The full submission can be downloaded on the inquiry’s website.

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