

Statement

5 July 2018

Removal of Priority of Access Guidelines further disadvantages vulnerable children

Northside Community Service expresses our serious concern with the Federal Government's decision to remove the requirement for services regulated under the National Quality Framework to provide priority of access to children at risk of vulnerability and disadvantage.

Until July 2, services in every community around Australia were required to provide priority of access to a child at risk of serious abuse or neglect; a child of a single parent; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families; and families which include a person with a disability.

Under the Government's New Child Care Package, that requirement was quietly removed.

The Priority of Access guidelines were a crucial safety net for children and families at risk of vulnerability and disadvantage. While Northside believes that the majority of services will ensure they place the best interests of particular children and families at the heart of decision-making around enrolments, we do not believe it should be a choice. It should remain a requirement.

Today, Northside has formally updated our Fees and Enrolment Policy to specifically embed Priority of Access Guidelines and reaffirm our commitment to the importance of access to high-quality early education for all children. We have retained the recommended Priority of Access principles from the previous system.

We call on the Federal Education Minister Simon Birmingham to re-institute the Priority of Access guidelines under the new Child Care Package.

We call on all organisations providing early childhood education and care under the National Quality Framework to join us in affirming their commitment to continue operating under the Priority of Access guidelines, and to update their policies to reflect that commitment.

Supporting children at risk should not be a service-by-service, community-by-community decision. It should be a foundational principle of every service that supports children's learning and wellbeing.

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