

OHCHR REGISTRY



Government of South Australia

Hon Susan Close MP

04 JAN 2016

Recipients : CRPD

15MECD2363

Mr Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein
High Commissioner
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Palais des Nations
8-14 Avenue de la Paix
CH-1211 Geneva 10
SWITZERLAND

Dear Mr Al Hussein

I write in relation to the United Nations Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities.

It has been brought to my attention the absence of representation of early childhood in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities.

As I am sure you are aware, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD 2007) identifies the right of all children to:

'access an inclusive, quality and free primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live' (Article 24, s.2.b).

I am advised this right to inclusive education does not make any reference to early childhood, a critical time of life for education and development. Research in neuroscience and biology has confirmed the importance of the early years, in particular the first five years, as being critical to the long term health and development of children and their future life chances as adults.

The South Australian Government has included early childhood as a strategic priority and is committed to maximising investment in the early years to deliver better outcomes for children particularly those who are the most vulnerable. In South Australia, the Department for Education and Child Development provides quality and free early intervention programs for children with a disability, including preschool support programs, inclusive preschool programs and preschool speech and language programs.

Minister for Education and Child Development
Minister for the Public Sector

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There is considerable international evidence to support the provision of effective early intervention programs when they are embedded in inclusive educational programs. Research demonstrates that the earlier a child is identified as having a disability, the more likely they will benefit from intervention strategies and programs and that these programs can change the course of developmental trajectories for these vulnerable children. The Inclusive Early Childhood Service System (IECSS) Policy Brief No 2, March 2015, which was a submission to the *Day of General Discussion (DGD) on the right to education for persons with disabilities*, held on 15 April 2015, at Palais des Nations, Geneva states that:

'Early intervention has been linked to lower rates of special education use, parents who are better prepared to advocate and identify their children's rights, and better child development outcomes'.

As the South Australian Minister for Education and Child Development I recognise the importance of ensuring that the rights of all children with disability are appropriately represented.

I respectfully request that the United Nations recognise Early Childhood Education and Care as integral to inclusive education and ask that the *United Nations Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities* be amended to include reference to Early Childhood Education and Care.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Close'.

Susan Close
Minister for Education and Child Development

18 / 12 / 2015

