

6.2 15 HOURS KINDERGARTEN ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN

Submitting Councillor: Cr Shane McCluskey

MOTION

That Council joins with the Municipal Association of Victoria, other councils and the kindergarten families of Monash in the “I Love Kinder” advocacy campaign to seek a commitment from the Federal Government for ongoing funding for the agreed additional 5 hours of kindergarten funding which will ensure kindergarten children have universal access to 15 hours of kindergarten.

INTRODUCTION

In November 2008 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) endorsed the National Agenda of Universal Access to 15 hours of preschool a week for four year-olds. This was closely followed by the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care in 2009. Funding to the states and territories has been in place since then through successive National Partnership Agreements.

The Australian Government has not committed ongoing funding for National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education beyond December 2019; and in May 2018 it decided to withdraw from the National Partnership on the National Quality Agenda – the system overseeing regulation and quality assessment of early childhood education and care services.

BACKGROUND

Permanent kindergarten funding and a quality assessment system are vital as all Monash children deserve the best start with a high quality, stable education. Monash families cannot contribute any more funding to send their children to kindergarten.

There is irrefutable international and national evidence linking kindergarten attendance to improved student results in numeracy, reading and spelling. Further, international evidence has shown for every \$1 invested by governments in early childhood education, there is a \$2 - \$4 return through higher wages, more tax revenue, reduced school and criminal justice expenditure.

DISCUSSION

The issue of kindergarten funding is now firmly on the political agenda, following the commitments made by the Federal Opposition on Thursday 4 October 2018. My priority is to ensure that an ongoing funding commitment is included in the 2019 – 2020 Federal budget on 2 April 2019 by launching the “I Love Kinder” advocacy campaign at Waverley Meadows kindergarten in early February 2019.

I am commending to my colleagues the “I Love Kinder” advocacy campaign which will be used by a large number of Victorian Councils. By Monash also joining this campaign

Monash will be providing a consistent message to the Federal Government about what we believe is important for the children of Monash.

The key messages being provided to the Federal Government through the “*I Love Kinder*” campaign are seeking a commitment to:

1. Provide ongoing funding for the agreed additional 5 hours of kindergarten funding to ensure all kindergarten children have universal access to 15 hours of kindergarten, and
2. Deliver an enduring funding arrangement for 15 hours kindergarten beyond 2019, plus a long-term commitment for the National Quality Agenda.

I would like to acknowledge Wyndham City Council and my fellow Mayor Cr Peter Maynard for his leadership in this advocacy campaign. I urge the Monash community to join us on this important advocacy by signing up to the “*I Love Kinder*” campaign – <https://ilovekinder.org.au/>.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Social Implications of the “*I Love Kinder*” advocacy campaign are focussed on the ability for all children in Monash to be able to attend 15 hours of kindergarten prior to school commencement and therefore have the best possible start to life. All parents will be able to afford to send their children to kindergarten for 15 hours.

In the long term society benefits by ensuring all children commence school ready to learn and therefore are able to develop into contributing citizens of the Monash community.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The “*I Love Kinder*” advocacy has no financial implication to Council.

CONCLUSION

I strongly commend the proposed “*I Love Kinder*” advocacy campaign which will provide a consistent message to the Federal Government from a wide range of organisations, including Monash Council, on behalf of all children and families of Monash. I believe we have a responsibility to the children of Monash to join with this campaign.