A large, thick, curved graphic element that starts as a solid orange line from the top left, curves downwards and to the right, and then continues as a solid purple line towards the bottom left.

Targeting investment where it counts: Identifying communities for priority investment in integrated early learning models

Summary brief – Tasmania

Introduction

Social Ventures Australia (SVA) is an innovative social impact organisation that works with partners to help solve challenging problems, speeding up innovation and redesigning systems so more people in Australia can live their best life. Within SVA, our early years team works to make sure that children experiencing significant disadvantage and vulnerability have access to the supports they need.

This summary brief is drawn from the report, *Targeting investment where it counts*, released in February 2025 by SVA in collaboration with Deloitte Access Economics and the Mitchell Institute. The report shares two models that identify priority locations for government investment in early childhood education and care (ECEC), and the opportunity that each presents to support better early childhood and lifelong outcomes for children:

1) Priority communities for Early Childhood Hubs

The 131 communities across Australia that sit at the nexus of both high early childhood disadvantage¹ and paucity of ECEC services (childcare desert²) are the areas that would benefit most from an Early Childhood Hub (ECH). The early years service system is complex and fragmented, and children and families with the greatest need often do not receive the services and supports they need. This is often due to the difficulty of navigating this system, marginalisation, distrust in the system and other financial and non-financial barriers. Integrated service delivery through an ECH is a key mechanism to overcoming these barriers and seeing families access the diverse range of services and supports they need to thrive.

What is an Early Childhood Hub (ECH)?

An ECH provides access to high-quality ECEC, developmental checks and child health services, family and parenting supports, allied health and other early intervention supports, as well as providing a space where children and families can come together to build social networks. Increasingly located on school sites, they overcome many barriers to accessing and participating in ECEC, outreaching to families and building trust, identifying and redressing developmental concerns and supporting families.

2) Priority communities for leveraging existing early childhood infrastructure for holistic or intensive ECEC models

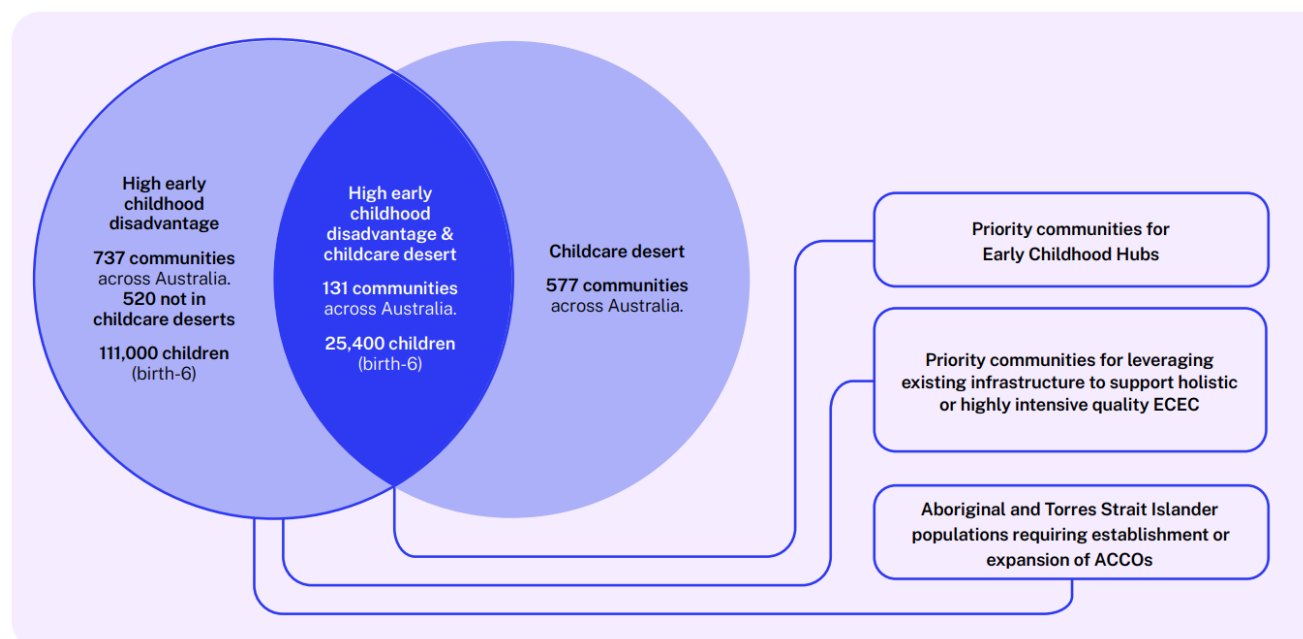
The 520 communities across Australia with high levels of early childhood disadvantage that are not in childcare deserts require attention to better understand and respond to prevailing issues within communities. The response will depend on local need, service availability and the profile of the available ECEC market. Quality is an important element (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander definitions of quality), with data showing that lower quality ECEC services predominate in lower socioeconomic areas.³ Where appropriate, existing ECEC services could be supported to offer a holistic and/or highly intensive quality ECEC model for children.

¹ Early childhood disadvantage is used as a term to describe communities with both high socio-economic disadvantage and early childhood vulnerability. These areas are in SEIFA deciles 1-4 and have over 10% of children developmentally vulnerably on two or more AEDC domains.

² The shortlist of areas was refined to only include areas where the population of children experiencing significant disadvantage is over 50 children. This criterion aims to exclude areas that have a very low population of children in need and therefore may require a different solution. It also does not include areas that contain a 'hot spot' SA1 for childcare supply using the Mitchell Institute's hot and cold spot analysis.

³ Productivity Commission (2024). A path to universal early childhood education and care, Inquiry report no. 106, Vol. 1. June. Retrieved from <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/childhood/report/childhood-volume1-report.pdf>

Figure I. Intersection of early childhood disadvantage and childcare deserts in Australia



Note: 86 SA2s do not appear in either list. One SA2 had insufficient data. The remaining 85 are all childcare deserts but were excluded because they contained fewer than 50 children in need or included a hotspot SA1 within the SA2. Further detail on methodology can be found on page 13.

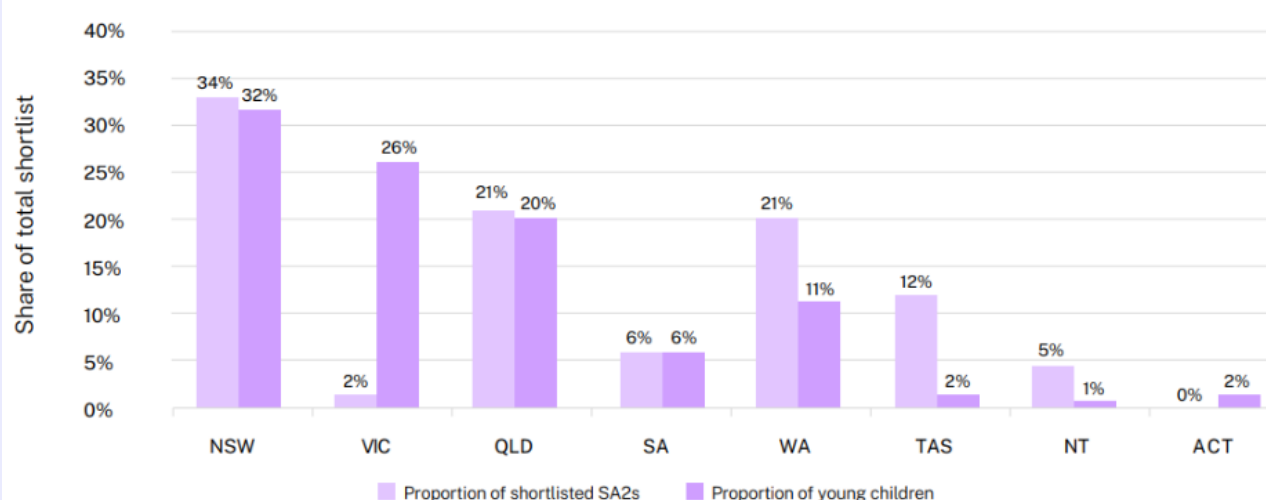
This brief shares some of the state-specific findings from the report. To access the full report, visit: <https://www.socialventures.org.au/about/publications/targeting-investment-where-it-counts/>.

Priority Tasmanian communities for investment

Communities that have significant early childhood disadvantage and are identified as childcare deserts

16 communities in Tasmania sit at the nexus of early childhood disadvantage and childcare deserts. All of these communities are regional or remote parts of the state, highlighting the need for targeted infrastructure investment in Early Childhood Hubs in regional areas to ensure children can access the services and supports they need to thrive. Notably, Tasmania has a high proportion of these communities (12%) in comparison to other Australian jurisdictions when considering the proportion of young children living in Tasmania (2%):

Figure 4.2: Proportion of priority areas by state and territory



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024) based on data from the Mitchell Institute, Australian Bureau of Statistics, and the Australian Early Development Census.

We note that an additional 11 communities identified as childcare deserts with significant early childhood disadvantage were excluded from the research findings because they have fewer than 50 children in need, or contain a 'hot spot' SA1 for childcare supply using the Mitchell Institute's hot and cold spot analysis. All of these communities are regional or remote, and further work is needed to identify how best to support children and families in need in these locations.

Communities that have significant early childhood disadvantage and are NOT identified as childcare deserts

41 communities across Tasmania experience high levels of child and family socio-economic disadvantage and developmental vulnerability. Of these, 14 (34%) are not in childcare deserts but still struggle to meet the needs of children experiencing disadvantage. This suggests that simply expanding services is not enough – tailored, high-quality models of support are needed to better respond to community needs.

Disproportionate impact on First Nations communities

Several of the highest-need areas in Tasmania have a significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. These communities will require an integrated service led by an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO). ACCOs play a key role in in meeting a child and family's need for a safe space to build cultural pride, confidence and resilience and to build on the strengths and skills of their children.⁴

Government response

The Tasmanian government has recognised the importance of ECEC, offering programs such as Working Together, which offers up to 20 free hours of early learning per week for eligible children in their year before starting Kindergarten.⁵ Other programs funded by the Tasmanian Government include the Early Childhood Inclusion Service (ECIS), a free service providing additional support to children aged 0-4.⁶

Tasmania also has an ECH model called Child and Family Learning Centres (CFLCs). These are designed to be safe, inclusive, and welcoming places where families can access a range of integrated services and wraparound supports in their local community. The Tasmanian Government recently announced a commitment for four new supersized CFLCs at Huonville, Longford, Scottsdale and Smithton, increasing the total number of CFLCs around the state to 22.⁷ A focus on these communities aligns with the report, with all of these areas experiencing high levels of child and family socio-economic disadvantage and developmental vulnerability. The report identifies 19 of the communities with current or proposed CFLCs are childcare deserts experiencing significant early childhood disadvantage.

⁴ Sydenham, E. (2019). Ensuring equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the early years, SNAICC and ECA.

⁵ Department for Education, Children and Young People (2024). Working Together. 1 February. <https://www.decyp.tas.gov.au/learning/early-years/working-together/>

⁶ Department for Education, Children and Young People (2024). Early Childhood Inclusion Service (ECIS). 9 July. <https://www.decyp.tas.gov.au/learning/early-years/early-childhood-inclusion-service-ecis/>

⁷ Premier of Tasmania (2025). New CFLCs on the way for Tasmanian families. [Media release] 7 February. <https://www.premier.tas.gov.au/latest-news/2025/february/new-cflcs-on-the-way-for-tasmanian-families>

Recommendations for Tasmania

While existing initiatives are welcome, more could be done to focus on helping children experiencing significant disadvantage. SVA recommends deeper investigation into Tasmania's 27 childcare deserts experiencing significant early childhood disadvantage, including in particular those communities with CFLCs, to better understand structural barriers and opportunities, building on community strengths.

SVA also recommends the Tasmanian Government use this report to guide investment decisions and partner with Commonwealth funding initiatives to ensure every child—no matter where they live—has access to the high-quality early learning support they need to thrive.

National recommendations

For all recommendations, deep engagement with identified communities on needs, priorities and gaps in early years supports is a critical first step to better understand and meet the needs of children and their families. This must include a commitment to shared decision making, self determination and cultural governance, in alignment with Closing the Gap Priority Reform One.

- The Commonwealth Government prioritise investment for new infrastructure in the 131 childcare deserts across Australia with high child and family disadvantage and developmental vulnerability.
- When investing in these areas, we recommend building Early Childhood Hubs or ACCO early years services in areas with high Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander populations. These children and families need more than a place in childcare.
- The Commonwealth Government provide funding for the effective and sustainable operation of these Early Childhood Hubs and ACCOs. Dedicated resources to grow and support the ACCO early years sector are also critical.
- The Commonwealth Government invest in a range of quality integrated early learning models in the 520 communities experiencing high child and family disadvantage and developmental vulnerability that are not childcare deserts. These include:
 - ACCO early years services;
 - holistic high-quality ECEC models; and/or
 - highly intensive, quality ECEC models, as detailed in this report.

Appendix

Tasmania - Areas that have high early childhood disadvantage and are in a childcare desert

State rank (Hubs need, n=16)	SA2	Remoteness Classification	Estimated population of 0–6 year old children in need
1	Longford	Inner Regional	60
2	Risdon Vale	Inner Regional	69
3	George Town	Outer Regional	114
4	Bridgewater - Gagebrook	Inner Regional	504
5	Newnham - Mayfield	Inner Regional	256
6	Acton - Upper Burnie	Outer Regional	52
7	Dodges Ferry - Lewisham	Inner Regional	57
8	St Helens - Scamander	Outer Regional	63
9	Ravenswood	Inner Regional	181
10	New Norfolk	Inner Regional	74
11	Berriedale - Chigwell	Inner Regional	67
12	Huonville - Franklin	Outer Regional	59
13	Waverley - St Leonards	Inner Regional	63
14	Ulverstone	Outer Regional	57
15	Beauty Point - Beaconsfield	Outer Regional	50
16	Parklands - Camdale	Outer Regional	125

Tasmania - Areas that have high early childhood disadvantage and are in a childcare desert, but have been excluded from the overlay above.

These communities have fewer than 50 children identified as in need, or contain a 'hot spot' SA1 for childcare supply.

State rank (Childhood disadvantage, n=41)	SA2	Remoteness Classification	Estimated population of 0–6 year old children in need
1	West Coast (Tas.)	Remote	49
6	Burnie - Wivenhoe	Outer Regional	43
13	Forestier - Tasman	Outer Regional	9
14	Central Highlands	Outer Regional	14
15	Geeveston - Dover	Outer Regional	25
21	Northern Midlands	Outer Regional	15
23	Scottsdale - Bridport	Outer Regional	70
25	Southern Midlands	Outer Regional	40
30	Montrose - Rosetta	Inner Regional	40
35	North West	Outer Regional	41
38	Sheffield - Railton	Outer Regional	39

Tasmania - Areas that have the highest early childhood disadvantage but are not classified as childcare deserts

State rank (Childhood disadvantage, n=41)	SA2	Remoteness Classification	Estimated population of 0–6 year old children in need
4	East Devonport	Outer Regional	138
5	Devonport	Outer Regional	227
7	Glenorchy	Inner Regional	206
11	South Launceston	Inner Regional	33
12	Derwent Park - Lutana	Inner Regional	93
17	Invermay	Inner Regional	57
18	Rokeby	Inner Regional	213
22	Triabunna - Bicheno	Remote	19
24	Mornington - Warrane	Inner Regional	81
27	Smithton	Outer Regional	33
29	Moonah	Inner Regional	60
31	West Ulverstone	Outer Regional	71
32	West Moonah	Inner Regional	59
40	Flinders and Cape Barren Islands	Very Remote	7



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