

A Bill for an Act relating to Childcare Reform Bill 2020.
To be enacted by the YMCA Victoria Youth Parliament;

Childcare Reform Bill 2020

A Bill for an Act to reform the Victorian Childcare System. This bill seeks to ensure that every Victorian family, regardless of their socio-economic status, is able to access sufficient childcare to sustain their own employment. Additionally, the bill legislates to increase the wages of all childcare workers across the state and facilitate collaboration between community health care providers and childcare centres; to the effect that parents and guardians shall be easily able to access necessary medical and psychological support of themselves and their families via childcare centres.

It has been consistently shown that a family's ability to access sufficient high-quality childcare is a critical indicator for their economic and educational wellbeing¹; enabling equitable workforce participation and ensuring consistent educational standards for all children regardless of socioeconomic background. This bill seeks to address the disparity that exists in the Victorian community's ability to access quality childcare whilst supporting the provision of additional support for households as Victorians continue to suffer the consequences of the national mental health crisis².

¹ "Financing the Future: An Equitable and Sustainable Approach to Early Childhood Education and Care [Executive Summary]." Researchconnections.org, 2014. <https://www.researchconnections.org/childcare/resources/27523>.

² "This Is Australia's Mental Health Crisis." Headspace.org.au, October 7, 2019. <https://headspace.org.au/blog/this-is-australias-mental-health-crisis/>.

PART I—Preliminary

Clause 1 Purpose

The main purposes of this act are—

- (a) to extend all Victorian family's access to quality childcare;
- (b) to improve all Victorian family's access to household support via the current childcare system.

Clause 2 Commencement

This Bill shall commence upon receiving assent from the Youth Governor of Victoria.

Clause 3 Definitions

In this Bill, we define the following to mean—

- (a) **family** means a unit of people comprised of an adult or adults with legal responsibility for a child or children;
- (b) **vulnerabilities** mean instances of poor mental or physical health, addiction, financial insecurity and abuse and trauma;
- (c) **the Board** means the Board of Victorian Childcare Reform.

PART II—Establishment

Clause 4 Establishment of the Board

- 4.1 A Board shall be established to administer and facilitate the implementation of structured psychological and social support programs and services for Victorian children and families to access via their childcare centres.
- 4.2 The Board will operate under the DHHS.

Clause 5 Implementation of social and psychological support for families at childcare centres

- 5.1 The Board will conduct an audit of every childcare centre operating in the state. Assessing and documenting the following—
 - (a) the number of families accessing each centre;
 - (b) the typical vulnerabilities of families and parents accessing each centre;
 - (c) the centre's proximity to local health and wellbeing services.
- 5.2 The Board will facilitate the integration of relevant health and wellbeing services into each childcare centre, to the effect that—
 - (a) at least once every fortnight families are able to arrange to see counsellors and psychologists at times that coincide with the collection of their children;
 - (b) at least once every fortnight families are able to arrange to see child and maternity nurses at times that coincide with the collection of their children;

- (c) local community health centres are able to collaborate with childcare centres to run programs and deliver information related to their key public health objectives.

Clause 6 Retraining of childcare staff

- 6.1 Over the first 12 months of the implementation of the bill, each Victorian childcare centre shall nominate 1 employee for every 30 children in their care, to receive training as a child and family counsellor.

Clause 7 Base salary increase for all Victorian childcare workers

- 7.1 All individuals currently employed within the childcare sector shall receive a base salary increase.

Clause 8 Non-discriminatory access to childcare

- 8.1 Every Victorian family with children below the age of 8 years shall be granted an annual childcare allowance based on the age of their children.
- 8.2 The allowance shall be sufficient to enable each relevant family member to access full-time work at their own discretion.
- 8.3 The allowance shall only be redeemable at a family's local childcare centre after an employer has specified that the relevant caregiver is employed and thus eligible for the childcare allowance.