

36



## **PRIME MINISTER**

93/95

### **STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP EPAC TASK FORCE ON FUTURE CHILD CARE PROVISION IN AUSTRALIA**

Today I have asked EPAC, the Economic Planning Advisory Commission, to establish a task force to investigate and report on child care provision in Australia.

Child care is crucially important in Australia's economic and social development. It influences decisions about participation in the workforce; it provides parents with the opportunity to undertake education, training and other activities; and it gives children broader experiences which help their social, physical and intellectual development.

Changing work patterns and family arrangements mean that a constructive and forward-looking review for child-care provision is timely.

We need a child care program that delivers the services that Australian families need while, at the same time, involving predictable Commonwealth outlays and appropriate linkages of Commonwealth, State, community and private sector services. Child care services are also an integral part of the Government's approach to building a highly skilled and adaptable workforce, as demonstrated by our commitment to meet the demand for work-related child care by the year 2001.

The Government has already made significant progress towards meeting these goals. By the end of March 1995, there were 262,500 Commonwealth funded child care places against a target of 300,000 places by 1996-97. The Minister for Family Services, Senator Rosemary Crowley, is also overseeing the development of innovative services, especially in rural areas, and the introduction of the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System. Better coordinated and more flexible child care services are also on the agenda of the Council of Australian Governments.

The work of the EPAC task force will complement other work being undertaken. It will have a medium to long-term focus. While not ignoring current problems and challenges, the aim will be to set directions for the future which will best suit Australia's economic and social needs.

Given this focus, the EPAC task force will investigate and report on the prospective demand for child care, best practice in the provision of child care, and the links between the provision of child care and other children's and family services.

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### EPAC TASK FORCE ON FUTURE CHILD CARE PROVISION

Having regard to the Government's child care policy, including its commitment to meet the demand for work-related child care by 2001, EPAC will establish a Task Force to investigate and report on the prospective demand for child care, best practice in the provision of child care, and the links between the provision of child care and other children's and family services.

For the purposes of the inquiry and report, the focus will be on the provision of paid child care for children aged 12 years and under by persons other than the immediate family of the child.

In reporting on these matters, the Task Force will focus on:

- (a) prospective developments in family formation, labour force participation and job patterns, and the implications of these and related developments for the demand for child care;
- (b) best practice in the provision of child care in each of the sectors of family day care, long day care, outside school hours care and occasional care as evidenced by examples in both the community and private sectors in Australia and overseas;
- (c) possible future structures and trends in provision of child care and the impact of government policies on availability, pricing and quality of various forms of child care;
- (d) medium to long-term goals and mechanisms for child care provision and for the appropriate linkages of child care and children's services; and
- (e) the relationships between suppliers of child care services, families who use child care services, budget holders in the sector and regulators, and desirable changes to these in the medium to long-term.

The Task Force is to have regard to findings of the Law Reform Commission Report *Child Care for Kids*, the Auditor-General's efficiency audit report *Mind the Children*, and the Report of the National Council for the International Year of the Family.

The Task Force is also to have regard to measures already taken by the Commonwealth in recent Budgets and by governments as part of the COAG review of community services provision.

The Task Force is to report to the Government by the end of July 1996.

The Task Force's findings will be released by the Government and used in the Government's subsequent discussions with the States and the community on this subject.

The report of the task force will therefore assist governments in planning to meet demand for child care in the future. It will aid both governments and child care providers in designing and implementing the best and most efficient forms of child care. It will address problems of coordination in delivery that too often confront users of family and children's services.

The task force will comprise Patricia Faulkner (Chair), Bruce Hartnett, Wendy McCarthy AO, and Glenn Withers AO (ex-officio). A small secretariat for the task force will operate within EPAC. The terms of reference for the task force and information on its members are attached.

The task force will release an issues paper and receive submissions up until the end of February 1996. It will report its findings to the Government by July 1996.

CANBERRA  
30 August 1995

**EPAC TASK FORCE ON FUTURE CHILD CARE PROVISION****SUMMARY VITAE****Patricia Faulkner**

Currently Director, KPMG Management Consulting Pty Ltd. Formerly Head, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Victoria and senior executive in Victorian Department of Labour (Occupational Safety and Health) and Victorian Public Service Board.

**Bruce Hartnett**

Currently Group Employee Relations Manager, NAB. Formerly ICI Corporate Employee Relations Manager, in senior positions in Victorian Departments of Industry Development, Tourism and Transport, and ACTU research officer and advocate.

**Wendy McCarthy AO**

Currently Chair of the Australian Heritage Commission and President of Chief Executive Women. Formerly Chief Executive of Price Brent and the Family Planning Association, Deputy Chair of the ABC and General Manager (Communications) for the Australian Bicentennial.

**Glenn Withers AO, Director, EPAC (ex officio)**